

Dean *S W I F T*'s

LEGACY

TO THE
WICKED AUTHORS
OF THE
PRESENT AGE.

In Three P A R T S.

The two First containing Arguments against abolishing Christianity; and a Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners: both new Modell'd, and adapted to the present Times.

The Third consisting of some New and Tritical Reflections on *Freethinking*, and *Freethinkers*: Also Animadversions and Remarks *variorum*.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HAVING thought fit to retouch and new Model the two following short Treatises, to adapt them to the present Times, and apply the Arguments and Observations contained therein, to the Deistical and Atheistical Authors of the present Age; and being determined to leave them as a Legacy to these wicked Writers. I have accordingly appointed my worthy Friend Mr. H.F. to Reprint and Publish, for the Use and Benefit of the said Authors, the aforesaid Legacy, immediately after my Decease: And this I do, in Order to awaken them to a just Sense of their Duty, and to put them in Mind (from my Example) hereafter to employ their Wit and Learning, if they have any, to better Purposes than those they have hitherto appear'd to aim at.

J. S.





A
LEGACY
 TO THE
WICKED AUTHORS, &c.

PART I.

Containing some Arguments to prove that the abolishing of CHRISTIANITY in GREAT BRITAIN, may, as Things now stand, be attended with some Inconveniencies, and perhaps not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby. NEW MODELL'D.

IT may not, perhaps, be safe for an Author now a Days, to appear as an Advocate for the Christian Religion, at a Juncture when the general Humour and Disposition of the World is against it; and when all

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Parties seem so unanimously determined to lay it aside, and to root the Principles of it out of their Minds.: As we may certainly conclude from their Actions, their Discourses, and their Writings. However, I know not how it is, whether from the Affectation of Singularity, or the Perverseness of Human Nature, but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this Opinion. Nay, more, if any Body should give me certain Information of an Order being issued out for my immediate Prosecution by the Attorney General, I should still confess, that in the present Posture of our Affairs at Home or Abroad, I do not yet see the absolute Necessity of extirpating the Christian Religion from among us. This perhaps may appear too great a Paradox even for our wise and paradoxical Age to endure ; therefore, I shall handle it with all imaginable Tenderness, and with the utmost Deference to that great and profound Majority which is of another Sentiment.

By the Way, the curious may please to observe, how much the Genius of a Nation may alter in half an Age. I have heard it affirmed for certain by some very old People, that the contrary Opinion was, even in their Memories, as much in Vogue as the other is now ; and, that a Project for the abolishing of Christianity would then have appeared as singular, and

and have been thought as absurd, as it would be at this time to write or discourse in its Defence.

Therefore I freely own, that all Appearances are against me. The System of the Gospel after the Fate of other Systems, is generally antiquated and exploded; and the Mass, or Body of the common People, among whom it seems to have had its latest Credit, are now grown as much ashamed of it as their Betters. Opinions like Fashions always descending from those of Quality, to the middle sort, and thence to the Vulgar; where at Length they are dropt and vanish.

But here I would not be mistaken, and must therefore be so bold as to borrow a Distinction from the Writers on the other Side, when they make a Difference betwixt *Nominal* and *Real Trinitarians*. For I hope no Reader imagines me so weak as to stand up in the Defence of *Real Christianity*, such as in primitive Times had an actual Influence over the Belief and Actions of its Professors: (*if we may believe the Authors of those Ages*) to offer at the restoring of *that* would indeed be a wild Project; that would be to dig up Foundations, to destroy at one Blow all the Wit, and half the Learning of the Kingdom; to break the entire Frame and Constitution of Things, to ruin Trade, extinguish Arts and

Sciences together with the Professors of them; in short, to turn our Courts, Exchanges, and Shops, into Desarts; and would be full as absurd as the Proposal of *Horace*, when he advised the *Romans*, all in a Body, to leave their City, and seek a new Seat in some remote Part of the World, by way of a Cure for the Corruption of their Manners. Therefore I think this Caution was in itself altogether unnecessary (*which I have inserted only to prevent all Possibility of Cavilling.*) Since every candid Reader will easily understand my Discourse to be intended only in Defence of *Nominal Christianity*, the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general Consent, as utterly inconsistent with all our present Schemes of Wealth and Power.

But why should we therefore cast off the *Name and Title of Christians*? For, notwithstanding the general Opinion and Resolution be so violent for it, yet I confess I cannot (with Submission) apprehend the Consequence necessary. However, since the Undertakers propose such wonderful Advantages to the Nation by this Project, and advance many plausible Objections against the Systems of *Christianity*, I shall briefly consider the Strength of both, fairly allow them their greatest Weight, and offer such Answers as I think most reasonable. After which I will beg Leave to shew what Inconveniencies may possibly happen by such

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an Innovation, in the present Posture of our Affairs.

First, one great Advantage proposed by the abolishing of *Christianity* is, That it would very much enlarge and establish Liberty of Conscience, that great Bulwark of our Nation, and of the Protestant Religion, which is still too much limited by Priest-craft, notwithstanding all the good Intentions of the Legislature: As we have lately found by a severe Instance. For it is confidently reported, that two young Gentlemen of real Hopes, bright Wit, and profound Judgment; who by a thorough Examination of Causes and Effects, and by the meer Force of natural Abilities, without the least Tincture of Learning; having made a Discovery, that there was no God, and generously communicating their Thoughts for the good of the Publick, were by an unparalled Severity, and upon some strange obsolete Law, broke for Blasphemy. And, as it hath been wisely observed, if Persecution once begins, no Man alive knows how far it may reach, or where it will end.

In Answer to all which, with Deference to wiser Judgments, I think this rather shows the Necessity of nominal Religion among us. Great Wits love to be free with the highest Objects; and if they cannot be allowed a *God* to revile or renounce, they will be apt to speak
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evil of Dignities, abuse the Government, and reflect upon the Ministry : Which I am sure few will deny to be of much more pernicious Consequence; according to the saying of *Tiberius*, *Deorum Offensa Diis curæ*. As to the particular Fact related, I think it is not fair to argue from one Instance, and perhaps another cannot be produced : For (to the Comfort of all those who may be apprehensive of Persecution) Blasphemy we know is yet freely spoke a Million of Times in every Coffee-House and Tavern, or wherever else good Company meet. It must be allowed indeed, that to break an *English* Free-Born Officer, *only for Blasphemy*, was, to speak the gentlest of such an Action, a very high strain of absolute Power. Little can be said in Excuse for the General ; perhaps he was afraid it might give Offence to the *Allies*, among whom, for ought we know, it may be the Custom of the Country to belive a God. But if he argued, as some have done upon a mistaken Principle, that an Officer who is guilty of speaking *Blasphemy*, may sometime or other proceed so far as to raise a Mutiny, the Consequence is by no means to be admitted ; for, surely, the Commander of an *English* Army is like to be but ill obey'd, whose Soldiers fear and reverence him as little as they do a Deity.

It is further objected against the Gospel System, *that it obliges Men to believe Things too difficult for Free-Thinkers, and such who have shook off the Prejudices of Education.* To which I answer, that People should be cautious how they raise Objections which reflect upon the Wisdom of the Nation. Is not every Body freely allow'd to believe whatever he pleases, and to publish his Belief to the World whenever he thinks fit? Would any indifferent Foreigner, who should read the Trumpery lately Written by *Tindal, Toland, Morgan, The Authors of the Fable of the Bees, the Resurrection of Jesus considered, Christianity not founded on Argument,* and forty more, imagine the Gospel to be our Rule of Faith, and to be confirmed by Parliaments? Does any Man desire to have it thought that he believes one Syllable of the Matter? and is any Man the Worse receiv'd upon that Score, or does he find his Want even of *nominal Faith* a Disadvantage to him in the Pursuit of any civil or military Employment? What if there be an old dormant Statute or two against him, are they not now 'obsolete, to a degree, that *Empson* and *Dudley* themselves, were they now alive, would find it impossible to put them in Execution.

It is likewise urged, that there are, by Computation, in this Kingdom, above ten Thousand Parsons, whose Revenues added to those
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of my Lords the Bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young Gentlemen of Wit, and Pleasure, and Free-thinking Principles, Enemies to Priest-craft, Pedantry, and Prejudices; who might be an Ornament to the Court and Town: And then, again, so great a Number of able (*bodied*) Divines might be a recruit to our Fleets and Armies. This indeed appears to be a Consideration of some Weight: But then on the other side, several Things deserve to be considered likewise, *viz.* Whether it may not be thought necessary that in certain Tracts of Country, like what we call Parishes, there should be one Man at least, of Abilities to Read and Write. Then it seems a wrong Computation, that the Revenues of the Church throughout this Island would be large enough to maintain two hundred young Gentlemen, or even half that Number, after the present refined way of living, that is, to allow each of them such an Income, as in the modern Phrase, would make them easy. But still there is in this Project a greater Mischief behind; and we ought to beware of the Woman's Folly, who killed the Hen that every Morning laid her a golden Egg. For, pray what would be come of our Posterity in the next Age, if we had nothing to trust to, besides the scrophulous consumptive Production furnish'd by our Men of Wit and Pleasure, when having squandered away their
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Vigour, Health and Estates, they are forced by some disagreeable Marriage to piece up their broken Fortunes, and entail rottenness and Politeness on their Children? Now here are ten Thousand Persons reduced, by the wise Regulations of *Henry* the Eighth, to the Necessity of a low Dyet, and moderate Exercise; who are the only great Restorers of our Breed; and without them the Nation would, in an Age or two, become but one great Hospital.

Another Advantage propos'd by the abolishing of Christianity, is the clear Gain of one Day in seven, which is now entirely lost, and consequently the Kingdom one Seventh less considerable in Trade, Business, and Pleasure; beside the Loss to the Publick of so many stately Structures now in the Hands of the Clergy, which might be converted into Play-Houses, Exchanges, Market-Houses, common Dormitories, and other publick Edifices.

I hope I shall be forgiven a hard Word if I call this a perfect Cavil. I readily own there hath been an old Custom Time out of Mind, for People to assemble in the Churches every *Sunday*, and that Shops are still frequently shut on that Day, in Order, as it is conceiv'd, to preserve the Memory of that ancient Practice, but how this can prove an Hindrance
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to Business or Pleasure, is hard to imagine. What if the Men of Pleasure are forced one Day in the Week to *Game at Home* instead of the *Chocolate-House*? besides, are not the *Taverns* and *Coffee-Houses* open? Can there be a more convenient Season for taking a Dose of Physick? Are fewer *Claps* got upon *Sundays* than other Days? Is not that the chief Day for the Citizens of *London*, and *Westminster*, and the Traders all over the Nation, to sum up the Accounts of the Week, to contrive Puffs for the daily Advertiser and Country Journals; and for Lawyers to prepare their Briefs? But I would fain know how it can be pretended that the Churches are misapplied. Where are more Appointments and Rendezvous of Gallantry? Where more Care to appear in the foremost Box with greater Advantage of Dress? Where more meetings for Business? Where more Bargains driven of all Sorts? And where so many Conveniencies or Incitements to Sleep?

There is one Advantage greater than any of the foregoing, proposed by the abolishing of Christianity, *viz.* that it will utterly extinguish Parties among us, by removing those factious Distinctions of *Whig* and *Tory*, *Presbyterian* and *Church of England*, which are so many mutual Clogs upon publick Proceedings, and are apt to prefer the gratifying themselves or depressing

depressing their Adversaries, before the most important Interest of the State.

I Confess if it were certain that so great an Advantage would accrue to the Nation by this Expedient, I would submit and be silent. But will any Man say, that if the Words *Whoring, Drinking, Cheating, Lying, Stealing*, were by Act of Parliament ejected out of the *English* Tongue, we should all awake next Morning *Chaste and Temperate, Honest and Just*, and *Lovers of Truth*. Is this a fair Consequence? Or if the Physicians were to forbid us to pronounce the Words *Pox, Gout, Rheumatism*, and *Stone*, would that Expedient serve like so many *Talismans* to destroy the Diseases themselves. Are Party and Faction rooted in Men's Heart no deeper than Phrases borrowed from Religion, or founded upon no firmer Principles? And is our Language so Poor that we cannot find other Terms to express them? Are *Envy, Pride, Avarice* and *Ambition* such ill Nomenclators, that they cannot furnish Appellations for their Owners? Will not *Heydukes* and *Mamelukes, Mandarines* and *Patskaws*, or any other Words formed at Pleasure, serve to distinguish those who are in the Ministry, from those who would be in it if they could? What, for instance, is easier than to vary the form of Speech, and Instead of the Word, *Church*, make it a Question in Politicks, Whether the

Monument be in Danger? Because Religion was nearest at Hand, to furnish a few convenient Phrases, is our Invention so barren that can find no others? Suppose for Arguments Sake, that the Tories were fond of *Operas*, the Whigs of *Pantomimes*, would not *Operanians* and *Pantomimians* be very tolerable Marks of Distinction? The *Prasini* and *Veneti* two most virulent Factions in *Italy*, began by a Distinction of Colours in Ribbands, which we might do with as good a Grace about the Superiority of the *Blue* and the *Green*, and serve as properly to divide the Court, the Parliament, and the Kingdom between them, as any Terms of Art whatsoever, borrowed from Religion. And therefore I think there is little Force in this Objection against Christianity, or Prospect of so great an Advantage as is proposed by the Extirpation of it.

'Tis again objected as a very absurd ridiculous Custom, that a Set of Men should be suffered, much less hired and employed, to bawl one Day in seven against the Lawfulness of those Methods which every Body now a-days makes Use of, in the Pursuit of *Riches*, *Honours*, *Titles* and *Pleasures*. But this Objection is, I think, a little unworthy so refined an Age as ours. Let us argue this Matter calmly; I appeal to the Breast of every polite Free-thinker, whether, when in Pursuit of the Gratification of any Passion, he hath not felt

a wonderful Incitement, by reflecting that it was a thing forbidden: And therefore we see, in order to cultivate this Turn of Mind, the Wisdom of the Legislature hath take special Care, that the Ladies should be plentifully furnish'd with prohibited Silks, Gentlemen with prohibited Wine, and the common People with prohibited Gin: And indeed it were to be wish'd that some other Prohibitions were promoted, in order to improve the Pleasures of the Town, which for want of such Expedients begin already, I am told, to flag and grow languid; frequently giving Way to cruel Inroads of the Spleen.

'Tis likewise proposed as a great Advantage to the Publick, that if we once discard the System of the Gospel, all Religion will of Course be banished for ever, and consequently along with it those grievous Prejudices of Education, which, under the Names of *Virtue*, *Conscience*, *Honour*, *Justice*, and the like, are so apt to disturb the Peace of human Minds, and the Notions whereof are sometimes so hard to be eradicated by right Reason or Free-thinking, that we run a great Hazard of having some few remains of them clinging about us during the whole Course of our Lives.

Here, in answer to this Objection, I observe, how difficult it is to get rid of a Phrase which

which the World is once grown fond of, though the Occasion that first produced it, be entirely taken away. Some Years ago, if a Man had but an ill-favoured Nose, the deep Thinkers of that Age would some way or other contrive to impute the Cause to the Prejudice of his Education. From this Fountain were said to be derived all our foolish Notions of Justice, Piety, Love of our Country, all our Opinions of God or a future State, Heaven, Hell, and the like: And there might formerly perhaps have been some Pretence for this Charge; but such effectual Care hath been since taken to remove those Prejudices, by an entire Change in the Methods of Education, that (with Honour I mention it to our polite Innovators) the young Gentlemen who are now on the Scene, seem not to have the least Tincture left of those Infusions, or String of those Weeds, and by Consequence the Reason for abolishing nominal Christianity on that Pretext is wholly ceas'd.

For the rest, it may perhaps admit a Controversy, whether the banishing all Notions of Religion whatever, would be convenient for the Vulgar. Not that I am in the least of Opinion with those who hold Religion to have been the Invention of Politicians, to keep the lower Part of the World in Awe by the Fear of invisible Powers: Unless Mankind were then very different from what it is now;
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for I look upon the Mass, or Body of our People here in *England*, to be as Free-Thinkers, that is to say as staunch Unbelievers, as any of the highest Rank. However I am of Opinion, that some few scattered Notions of a superior Power, are of singular Use among the common People, as furnishing excellent Materials to keep Children quiet when they grow peevish, and providing Topicks of Amusement in a tedious Winter-Night.

Lastly, 'tis propos'd as a singular Advantage, that the abolishing of Christianity will very much contribute to the uniting of *Protestants*, by enlarging the Terms of Communion so as to take in all Sorts of *Dissenters*, who are now shut out of the Pale upon account of a few Ceremonies, which all Sides confess to be things indifferent: That this alone will effectually answer the great Ends of a Scheme for Comprehension, by opening a large noble Gate, at which all Bodies may enter; whereas the chaffering with *Dissenters*, and dodging about this or t'other Ceremony, is but like opening a few Wickets, and leaving them at jarr, by which no more than one can get in at a time, and that, not without stooping, and sideling; and squeezing his Body.

To this I answer, that there is one darling Inclination of Mankind, which usually affects

affects to be a Retainer to Religion, though she be neither its Parent, its Godmother, nor its Friend ; I mean the Spirit of Opposition, which lived long before Christianity, and can easily subsist without it. Let us, for Instance, examine wherein the Opposition of Sectaries among us consists ; we shall find Christianity to have no Share in it at all. Does the Gospel any where prescribe a starch'd squeezed Countenance, a stiff formal Gait, a singularity of Manners and Habit, or any affected Forms and Modes of Speech different from the reasonable Part of Mankind ? Yet, if Christianity did not lend its Name to attend in the Gap, and to employ or divert these Humours, they would infallibly be spent in continual Oppositions to the Laws of the Land, and Disturbance of the publick Peace. There is a Portion of Enthusiasm assigned to every Nation, which if it hath not proper Objects to work on, will burst out, and set all the Country in a Flame. Therefore if the Quiet of a State can be bought by only flinging Men a few Ceremonies to devour, it is a Purchase no wise Man would refuse ; let the Mastiffs amuse themselves about a Sheep-skin stuffed with Hay, provided it will keep them from worrying the Flock. The Institution of Convents abroad, seems in one Point a Strain of great Wisdom, there being few Irregularities in human Passions, which may not have recourse to vent themselves in some of those Orders, which
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are so many Retreats for the *Speculative*, the *Melancholly*, the *Proud*, the *Silent*, the *Politick* and the *Morose*, to spend these Humours in, and evaporate the noxious Particles; for each of whom we in this Island are forced to provide a separate Sect of Religion, to keep them quiet; and whenever *Christianity shall be abolished*, the Legislature must find some other Expedient to employ and entertain them. For what imports it how large a Gate you open, if there will be always left a Number who place a Pride in not coming in.

Having thus considered the most important Objections against Christianity, and the chief Advantages proposed by the abolishing thereof; I shall now with equal Deference and Submission to wiser Judgments, as before, proceed to mention a few Inconveniencies that may happen if the Gospel should be repealed; which perhaps the Projectors may not have sufficiently considered.

And first, I am very sensible how much the Gentlemen of Wit and Pleasure are apt to murmur and be disgusted at the Sight of so many daggled-tailed Parsons, that happen to fall in their Way, and offend their Eyes; but at the same time these wise Reformers do not consider what an Advantage and Felicity it is, for great Wits to be always provided with Objects of Scorn and Contempt, in order to

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exercise and improve their Talents, and divert their Spleen from falling on each other, or on themselves, especially when all this may be done without the least imaginable Danger to their Persons.

And, to urge another Argument of a parallel Nature, If Christianity were once abolished, how could the Free-thinkers, the strong Reasoners, and the Men of profound Learning, be able to find another Subject so calculated in all Points whereon to display their Abilities. What wonderful Productions of Wit should we be deprived of, from those whose Genius by continual Practice hath been wholly turned upon Raillery and Invectives against Religion, and would therefore never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other Subject. We are daily complaining of the great decline of Wit among us, and should we take away the greatest, perhaps the only Topick we have left? Who would ever have suspected *Mandevill* for a Wit, or *Toland* for a Philosopher, if the inexhaustible Stock of Christianity had not been at Hand to provide them with Materials? What other Subject through all Art or Nature could have produced *Tindall* for a profound Author, or furnished him with Readers? It is the wise Choice of the Subject that adorns and distinguishes the Writer. For, had a Hundred such Pens as these been employed

ployed on the Side of Religion, they would have immediately sunk into Silence and Oblivion.

Nor do I think it wholly groundless, or my Fears altogether imaginary, that the abolishing of Christianity, may perhaps bring the Church in Danger, or at least put the Senate to the Trouble of another securing Vote. I desire I may not be mistaken; I am far from presuming to affirm or think that the Church is in Danger at present, or as Things now stand; but we know not how soon it may be so, when the Christian Religion is repealed. As plausible as this Project seems, a dangerous design may possibly lurk under it; have we not great Reason to suspect, that the *Atheists*, *Deists*, *Socinians*, *Anti-Trinitarians*, and other Subdivisions of Free-Thinkers, are Persons of very little Zeal for the present *Ecclesiastical* Establishment: These are very indifferent with Regard to Ceremonies; nor do they hold the *Jus Divinum* of Episcopacy. Therefore it is my real Opinion, that the Orthodox Clergy of the Church of *England*, have no great Reason to approve of their Project; for who knows but this Step may be intended with a political View towards altering the Constitution of the established Church, and setting up Presbytery in the Stead: Which I beg Leave to recommend to the serious Consideration of those at the Helm.

In the last Place, I think nothing can be more plain, than that by this Expedient, we shall run into the Evil we chiefly pretend to avoid ; and that the Abolishment of the *Christian* Religion, will be the readiest Course we can take to introduce *Popery*. And I am the more inclined to this Opinion, because we know it has been the constant Practice of the *Jesuits* to send over Emissaries, with Instructions to personate themselves Members of the several prevailing Sects amongst us. And it is recorded, that they have at sundry times appeared in the Guise of *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptists*, *Independents*. *Quakers*, and Church of *England* Men. Nay, I am credibly informed, that a few Years ago there did actually appear among the *Quakers*, two *Female Jesuits*, under the Names of *Drummond* and *Henshaw* ; and that the former made so great a Progress in her Mission, and had such great Success amongst those of her own Sex, that she had almost made Converts of all the Court Ladies : For, being honoured with the Presence of the late *Queen*, who went several Times to hear her preach at *Westminster*, a Report was spread at *St. James's*, that her *Majesty* was in a fair Way of becoming a *Proselyte* : Whereupon, a certain venerable *Dutchess* resolving to be in the Fashion as early as possible, gave immediate Orders for plain Silk-hoods, pinch'd Caps, and green Aprons, &c. The rest of the Ladies were following her

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Example as fast as they could, and *Sacharissa*, *Chloe*, and *Belinda*, began to provide themselves with demure, insensible Faces with all Expedition. In short, no-body knows how far this Affair might have been carried, had not her Majesty, upon the serious Representation of a Right Reverend Bishop, discontinued her Attendance on this Religious Phænomenon.

Every Body knows, that there are now living certain itinerant Preachers, who are very industrious in establishing a strange Kind of a Sect called *Methodists*, whose Tenets are in a very peculiar manner contrived to catch the Vulgar: Which if they can perfectly accomplish, they will undoubtedly have the Majority of the People on their Side, and how easy will it be for the Pope and Pretender to secure in their Interest, one or two of their leading Preachers, and the whole Flock must follow of course. I have heard it positively asserted, by one of the deepest, penetrating political Heads in the whole Nation, that he has made it his Business for several Years past, to attend very minutely to the Doctrines and Proceedings of the two *W—s—ys*; and has the greatest Reason in the World to believe them both to be Popish Priests. However, he is absolutely sure, one of them is as much a *Jesuit*, as ever *Parsons* or *Campion* were.

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I doubt not, but every Body in the Nation is now convinced, that the Reverend Mr. *G——e W——d* is hired and sent among us by the Queen of *Spain*; and furnished also with large Sums of Money by the King of *France*, to insinuate among the People, the Necessity of a thorough Reformation in Church and State; and to dispose them to favour an Invasion from *Dunkirk*, while he is contriving to deliver *Georgia* into the Hands of the *Spaniards*. Therefore, I humbly conceive, that there is no Necessity for the Legislative Power to encourage any Scheme for the Extirpation of the Christian Religion, or the Abolishment of the Established Constitution of the Church, seeing so many Hands are so busily employ'd to bring it about by slow Degrees, and almost imperceptible Methods. Nay, since the Fashion has been so much taken up of exploding Religion, the *Popish* Missionaries have not been wanting to mix with the *Free-Thinkers*; among whom the Author of *Christianity not founded on Argument*, is shrewdly suspected by discerning People to be an *Irish* Priest: The Truth of which plainly appears by an hundred Passages in his late Pamphlet. In short, the Fact is beyond Dispute, and the Reasoning they proceed by is right: For, supposing Christianity to be extinguished, the People will never be at Ease, till they find out some other Method of Worship; which will certainly produce Superstition, and that will infallibly end in *Popery*.
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But, If notwithstanding all I have said, it should still be thought necessary to have a Bill brought in for repealing Christianity, I would humbly offer an Amendment. That instead of the Word *Christianity*, may be put *Religion in General*, which, I conceive, will much better answer all the good Ends proposed by the Projectors of it. For, as long as we leave in Being a God and his Providence, with all the necessary Consequences which curious and inquisitive Men will be apt to draw from such Premises, we do not strike at the Root of the Evil, though we should ever so effectually annihilate the present Scheme of the Gospel: For, of what Use is Freedom of Thought, if it will not produce Freedom of Action? Which is the sole End, how remote soever in Appearance, of all Objections against Christianity; and therefore, the *Free-Thinkers* consider it as a Sort of Edifice, wherein all the Parts have such a mutual Dependence on each other, that if you happen to pull out one single Nail, the whole Fabrick falls to the Ground. This was happily exprest by one who had heard of a Text brought for Proof of the Trinity, which in an ancient Manuscript was differently read: He thereupon immediately took the Hint, and by a sudden Deduction of a long *Sorites*, most Logically concluded: *Why, if it be as you say, I may safely whore and drink on, and defy the Parson.* From which, and many the like Instances,

Instances, easy to be produced; I think nothing can be more manifest, than that the Quarrel is not against particular Points of hard Digestion in the Christian System, but against Religion in general: Which, by laying Restraints on human Nature, is supposed to be the great Enemy to Freedom of Thought and Action.

Upon the Whole, if it shall yet be thought for the Benefit of the Church and State, that Christianity must be abolished; I conceive, however, it may be more convenient to defer the Execution to a Time of Peace; and not venture in this Conjunction, to disoblige our Allies, who, as it falls out, are all Christians, and many of them, by the Prejudices of their Education, so bigotted, as to place a Sort of Pride in the Appellation. If, upon being rejected by them, we are to trust to an Alliance with the *Turk*, we shall find ourselves much deceived. For, as he is too remote, and generally engaged in War with the *Schach* of *Persia*, so his People would be more scandalized at our Infidelity, than our Christian Neighbours. For the *Turks* are not only strict Observers of Religious Worship; but what is worse, believe a God! Which is more than is required of us, even while we preserve the Name of *Christians*.

To conclude, Whatever some may think of the great Advantages to Trade by this favourite Scheme, I very much apprehend, that in six Months Time after the Act is passed for the Extirpation of the Gospel, the *Bank*, and the *East-India* Stock, may possibly fall, at least, *One per Cent.* And since that is fifty Times more than ever the Wisdom of our Age thought fit to venture for the Preservation of Christianity, I think there is no Reason that we should be at so great a Loss, merely for the Sake of destroying it.

P A R T II.

Containing a Project for the Advancement of Religion, and Reformation of Manners.
NEW MODELL'D.

AMONG all the Schemes which have been offered to the Publick, for many Years past, I have never yet seen or heard of any that have been calculated for the Improvement of Religion: Which, besides the Piety of the Design, and the Consequences of such a Reformation with regard to a future State, would certainly be the best natural Means for advancing the publick Felicity of the State, as well as the present Happiness of every Individual: For I am of Opinion, that as much as Faith and Morality are declin'd among us, they certainly might, in a short Time, and

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with no very great Trouble, be raised to as high a Perfection as human Nature is capable of receiving. The Plan which I have formed for executing this important Design, is so easy and obvious, and some present Opportunities so good, that in Order to reduce this Project to practice, there seems to want nothing more than to put those in Mind, who by their Honour, Duty, and Interest are chiefly concerned.

I am very well apprised, that it is but idle to propose Remedies before we are assured of the Disease, or to be anxious for a Consequence before we are convinced of the Danger; Therefore I shall first prove in general, that the Nation is extremely corrupted in Religion and Morals; and then I shall offer a short Scheme for the Reformation of both.

As to the First; I know it is usually looked upon as a meer Form of Speech, when Divines complain of the Wickedness of the Age: However, I believe, upon a fair Comparison with other Times and Countries, it will be found an *Undoubted Truth*.

And in Order to this, I shall deliver nothing but plain Matter of Fact without Exaggeration or Satire. I suppose it will be granted, that hardly one in a Hundred among our People of Quality or Gentry, appears to act by any Principle of Religion; that great
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Numbers of them entirely discard it, and are ready to own their Disbelief of all Revelation in ordinary Discourse. Nor is the Case much better among the Vulgar, especially in great Towns, where the Prophaneness and Ignorance of Handicraftsmen, small Traders, Servants, and the like, are to a Degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then it is observ'd abroad, that no Race of Mortals hath so little Sense of Religion as the *English* Soldiers; to confirm which, I have been told by some great Officers in the Army, that in the whole Compass of their Acquaintance they could not recollect three of their Profession, who seemed to regard or believe one Syllable of the Gospel: And the same at least may be said of the Fleet: The Consequences of all which upon the Actions of Men are equally manifest. They never go about as in former Times, to hide, or palliate their Vices, but expose them freely to publick View, like any other common Occurrences of Life, without the least Reproach from the World or themselves; for Instance, any Man will tell you, he intends to be drunk this Evening, or was so last Night, with as little Ceremony or Scruple as he would tell you the Time of the Day. He will let you know he is going to a Whore, or that he has got a Clap, with as much Indifference as he would a Piece of publick News. He will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least Passion or Provocation. And
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tho' all Regard for Reputation is not quite laid aside in the other Sex, 'tis however at so low an Ebb, that very few among them seem to think Virtue and Conduct of absolute Necessity for preserving it. If this be not so, how comes it to pass, that Women of tainted Reputations find the same Countenances and Reception in all publick Places with those of the nicest Virtue: Who pay and receive Visits from them without any Manner of Scruple? Which proceeding, I take to be of the most pernicious Consequence: It looks like a Sort of compounding between Virtue and Vice. This Depravity of Manners, I believe, our great Grandfathers and Grandmothers were very free from. In the honest Days of good Queen *Bess*, the Wife of a Plain Country Gentleman, who managed his own Estate, and sent his Corn to Market, would have been allowed the Precedency in all Places, before any W—re of Quality in the Kingdom. But our modern Ladies are allowed to be vicious, provided they be not profligate; as if there was a certain Point where Gallantry ends and Infamy begins; or that an hundred criminal Amours were not as pardonable as half a Score.

It would be endless to enumerate all the Corruptions which arise from the Excess of Play, or Gaming: The Cheats, the Quarrels, the Oaths and Blasphemies among the Men; the

the Neglect of Household-Affairs among the Women, the unlimited Freedoms, the undecent Passions, and lastly, the known Inlet to all Lewdness, when after an ill Run, the *Person* must answer the Defects of the *Purse*: The Rule on such Occasions holding true in Play as it does in Law, *Quod non habet in Crumena, luat in Corpore*.

But all these will appear as Trifles, if we step into other Scenes and consider the Fraud and Cozenage of Trading-men and Shopkeepers; that insatiable Gulph of Injustice and Oppression, the *Law*. The open Traffick of all Civil and Millitary Employments (*I wish it rested at these only*) without the least Regard to Merit or Qualifications: The corrupt Management of Men in Office; the many detestable Abuses in chusing those who represent the People, the Management of separate Interests and Factions among the Representatives. To these I must be bold to add the lamentable Ignorance among some of the Lower Clergy; the mean servile Temper of others; the Pert Pragmatical Demeaner of several young Stagers in Divinity, upon their first producing themselves into the World; with many other Circumstances needless, or rather invidious to mention; which falling in with the Corruptions already related, have, however unjustly, almost rendered the whole Order contemptible.

This is an Abstract of the general Depressities among us, without entering into Particulars: For that would be an endless Labour. But as universal and deep rooted as these appear to be, I am quite deceived, if an effectual Remedy might not be applied to most of them; neither am I at present upon a wild speculative Project, but such a one as may be easily put in Execution: Especially while the Prerogative of giving all Employments continues in the Crown, either immediately or by Subordination. For, by this means it is in the Power of the *Prince* to bring Piety and Virtue into Fashion, by making them become necessary Qualifications for Favour and Preferment. Which in a short Time would make Religion and Morality soon become fashionable Court-Virtues, and be taken up as the only Methods to get or keep Employments there.

The bare Example of a good Prince will always have a mighty Influence, even when the Age is very corrupt. This is manifestly clear from present Experience. For when was there ever a better Prince on the Throne than the present King? I do not talk of his Talents for Government, his Love of his People, or any other Qualities that are purely Regal; but his Piety, Charity, Temperance, and whatever other Virtues do best adorn

dorn a private Life; wherein, without Flattery, he hath never had any superior on the Throne of *England*: Yet will it be neither satire, or peevish Invective to affirm, that Infidelity and Vice are not much diminished since his coming to the Crown, nor will, in Probability, 'till some more effectual Remedies be provided.

Thus human Nature seems to lie under this disadvantage, that the Example alone of a vicious Prince will, in a small Time corrupt the Age; as in that of King *Charles* the Second: But the bare Example of a good one will never be sufficient to reform it, without further Endeavours. Princes must therefore supply this Defect by a vigorous Exercise of that Authority which the Law has put into their Hands, by making it every Man's Interest and Honour to cultivate Religion and Virtue; by rendering Vice a Disgrace, and the certain Ruin to Preferment or Pretensions: All which they should first endeavour to Execute in their own Courts and Families. For Instance, might not the King's Domesticks of the middle and lower Sort, be obliged, upon Penalty of Suspension, or Loss of their Employment, to a regular publick Exercise of religious Worship, to a decent Behaviour in the Church, to avoid Swearing and irreligious profane Discourses; and to the Appearance

at least of Temperance and Chastity? Might not the Care of all this be committed to the strict Inspection of proper Officers? Might not those of higher Rank and nearer Access to his Majesty, have his own Commands to the same Purpose, and receive the royal Approbation, or Resentment, in Proportion to their Compliance? Might not his Majesty lay his Injunctions on the Bishops and other great Men of *undoubted Piety*, to make diligent Enquiry, and give him Notice of any Person about him, who should prove to be of libertine or immoral Principles? Might not every one who enters upon any Office in his Majesty's Household, be obliged to take an Oath parallel to that against Simony, which is administered to the Clergy? 'Tis not to be doubted, but if these or the like Proceedings were duly observ'd, Morality and Religion, as I before observ'd, would soon become fashionable Court Virtues; and be looked upon as the only Methods to attain or keep Possession of Employments there: *And this single Consideration only, would have a mighty Influence over most of the Nobility and Principal Gentry.*

If such Methods as these were pursued as far as possible among those who are, or would be in the great Offices of the State, we should be amazed to see how general a Reformation
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it would in Time produce among us. For if Piety and Virtue were once reckoned Qualifications necessary for Preferment; every Man thus endowed, when put into high Stations, would readily imitate the King's Example in the Distribution of all Offices in his Disposal; especially if private Favour, or interested Partiality, would be imputed to him as a Misdemeanor, by which he would infallibly forfeit his Station and his Credit at Court. And, there being such great Numbers in Employment, scattered throughout his Majesty's Dominions, if all these were Exemplary in the Conduct of their Lives, and the Probity and Strictness of their Manners, Things would soon take a new Turn, appear with a new Face, and Religion receive a very great Encouragement. Nor would the publick Welfare be less advanced; since, of Nine Offices in Ten that are ill executed, the Defect is not in Capacity or Understanding, but in common Honesty. I know no Place or Employment for which Piety disqualifies any Man; and if it did, I doubt the Objection would not be very seasonably offered at present: Because, it is perhaps too just a Reflection, that in the Disposal of Places, the Question whether a Person be *fit* for what he is recommended, is very often the last that is thought of, and the least regarded.

As there are several pernicious Vices among us, which are frequently practised, and are notorious to the Eye of the whole World, and yet escape or elude the Punishment of any Law we have hitherto invented : Or perhaps we have had no Law at all against them ; such as Atheism, Drunkenness, Fraud, Avarice, and several others. So I have often imagined, that something parallel to the Office of *Censor* among the *Romans*, would be of great Use to us, and might be limited so far as to run no Hazard of its being carried to an exorbitant Height. The *Romans* understood Liberty at least as well as we, were as jealous of it, and upon every Occasion as bold Assertors. Yet I do not remember to have read any great Complaints of Abuses in that Office among them, but many admirable Effects of it are left upon Record. Were such an Office as this firmly established among us, and wisely regulated, the above-mentioned Vices and Enormities (which at present are out of the Reach of the Law) would come under its Cognizance, and might be very much reformed. Suppose for Instance, that itinerant Commissioners were appointed to inspect every where throughout the whole Kingdom, into the Conduct of Men in Office, with Respect to their Morals and Religion as well as their Abilities ; to receive the Complaints and Informations that should be offered against them, and make their Report

port upon Oath, to the grand *Censor*, or Master of the Order, who should be invested with full Power and Authority to sit in Judgment and inflict such Punishments on the Offenders, as he should think adequate to their Crimes, and Immoralities; and to confer Favours on good and worthy Men, and render their Merit conspicuous to the World: And surely six thousand Pounds a Year would not be ill applied, if settled upon as many Commissioners duly qualified, who should be obliged in Person to take their yearly Circuits in three Divisions. But I avoid entering into the Particulars of this Scheme, which, as it comes from a private Hand, may be liable to many Defects, tho' it may soon be digested by the Wisdom of the Nation.

But this is beside my present Design, which was only to shew what degree of Reformation lies in the Power of the King without the Interposition of the Legislature, and which his Majesty is obliged in Conscience to endeavour by his Authority, as much as he does by his Practice.

I take it for granted, that the Example of this great Town hath a mighty Influence over the whole Kingdom; and it is manifest that the Town is equally influenced by the Court and the Ministry, and those who by their Em-

Employments or their Hopes, depend upon them. Now let us suppose a Family, under so excellent a Prince as his present Majesty, as strictly regulated as I have above proposed; a Ministry, where every single Man was of distinguished Piety; and all the great Offices of State and Law filled after the same Manner: And with such as would be equally diligent in causing the subordinate Officers to follow the Example of their Superiors, under the Penalty of Loss of Favour and Place: And then will not every Body grant, that the Empire of Vice and Irreligion would soon be destroyed in this great Metropolis, and receive a terrible Blow throughout his Majesty's whole Dominions; every part of which hath so great an Intercourse with it, and so much affects to follow it Fashions?

For, if Religion were once understood to be the necessary Step to Favour and Preferment; can it be imagined that any Man would openly offend against it, who had the least regard for his Reputation or his Fortune? There is no Quality so contrary to any Nature, which Men cannot affect and put on upon Occasion, in order to serve an Interest, or gratify a prevailing Passion. The Proudest Man will personate Humility, the Morosest learn to flatter, the Laziest will be sedulous and active, when he is in pursuit of what he has much

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at Heart; how ready therefore would Men be to step in the Paths of Virtue and Piety, if they were once made the high Road to Favour and Fortune.

If Swearing and Prophaneness, scandalous, open and avowed Lewdness, excessive Gaming and Intemperance, were a little discountenanced in the Army, I cannot readily see what ill Consequences could reasonably be apprehended; for if Gentlemen of that Profession were at least obliged to some external Decorum in their Conduct; or even if a profligate Life and Character were not a Means of Advancement, and the Appearance of Piety a most infallible Hinderance, it is impossible the Corruptions there should be so universal and exorbitant. I have been assured by several great Officers, that no Troops abroad are so ill disciplin'd as the *English*, which cannot well be otherwise, while the common Soldiers have perpetually before their Eyes the vicious Examples of their Leaders; and it is hardly possible for those to commit any Crime, whereof these are not infinitely more guilty, and with less Temptation.

I have often heard it laid to the Charge of the Army, that the beastly Vice of drinking to Excess, was not only first brought among us by Gentlemen of that Profession; but that it hath

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cultivated

always been cultivated, and is now carried on by them to the highest Pitch of Wickedness, Filth, and Odiousness. Nay, in Truth, this stupid shameless Vice is now so epidemical among us, that not only Tinkers, Car-men, Kennel-Rakers, and Soldiers; but many of the young Nobility and Gentry are become great Proficients: And the latter Class take no more care than the former to hide their Talents, but are entirely got beyond all Sense of Shame, or Fear of Reproach.

But this might soon be remedied, if the King would think fit to declare, that no young Persons of Quality whatsoever, who were notoriously addicted to this or any other Vice; should be capable of his Favour, or even admitted into his Presence: With positive Orders to his Ministers and others in great Offices, to treat them in the same Manner; after which, all Men who had any regard for their Reputation, or any Prospect of Preferment, would avoid their Company. This would quickly make Vice so scandalous, that those who could not subdue, would at least endeavour to disguise it.

By the like Methods a Stop might be put to that ruinous Practice of deep Gaming: for the Reason why it prevails so much, is because a Treatment *directly opposite* in every Point

Point is made use of to promote it; by which means the Laws made against this Abuse are wholly eluded.

It is a mighty Fashion among too many weak People to rail and sneer at University Education; but I am firmly perswaded that this Cry is generally set up by those, who either never were sent to a College, or through their Irregularities and Stupidity never made the least Improvement while they were there. I have at least forty of the latter sort now in my Eye; several of them in this Town, whose *Learning, Manners, Temperance, Probity, good Nature, and Politicks*, are all of a Piece: Others of them in the Country, oppressing their Tenants, tyrannizing over the Neighbourhood, cheating the Vicar, talking Nonsense, and getting drunk at the Sessions. It is from such Seminaries as these that the World is provided with the several Tribes and Denominations of Free-Thinkers, who, in my Opinion, are not to be reformed by Arguments to prove the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, because Reasoning will never bring a Man to correct an ill Opinion, which by Reasoning he never acquired: For in the Course of Things, Men always grow vicious before they become Unbelievers; but if these People were once convinced that they are Profligates, by Arguments drawn from a

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View to their own *Quiet, Reputation, Health,* and *Advantage*, their Infidelity would soon drop off: This, indeed, I confess, is no easy Task; because it is almost in a literal Sense, *to fight with Beasts*: For it is allowed on all Hands, that the People of *Great Britain* are more corrupt in their Morals than any other Nation this Day under the Sun. And this Corruption is more owing to other Causes, both *numerous* and *obvious*, than to the Publication of irreligious Books: Which indeed are but the Consequence of the former. For all the Writers against Christianity, since the Revolution, have been of the lowest Rank among Men, in regard to *Literature, Wit,* and *good Sense* and upon that Account wholly unquallified to propagate *Infidelity* and *Wickedness*, unless among the People already abandoned.

I am almost of Opinion, that the Trade of *Infidelity*, hath been taken up only for an Expedient to keep in Countenance that universal Corruption of *Morals*, which many other Causes first contributed to introduce and to cultivate. And thus Mr. *Hobbs's* Saying upon Reason, may be much more properly applied to Religion: That, *If Religion will be against a Man, a Man will be against Religion.* Though after all I have heard a profligate Offer much stronger Arguments against paying his Debts, than ever he was known to do
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against Christianity ; indeed the Reason was, because in that Juncture he happened to be cloſer preſſed by the *Bailiff* than the *Parſon*.

It cannot be denied that the Want of ſtrict Diſcipline in the Universities, hath been of pernicious Conſequence to the Youth of this Nation, who are there left almoſt entirely to their own Management ; eſpecially thoſe among them of better Quality and Fortune : Who becauſe they are not under a Neceſſity of making Learning their Maintenance, are eaſily allowed to paſs their Time and take their Degrees with little or no Improvement : Than which there cannot be a greater Abſurdity. For if it is of no Advantage to them, to acquire Knowledge in thoſe Places, the Time there ſpent is at beſt utterly loſt : Becauſe every ornamental Part of Education is better taught elſewhere ; and as for keeping Youths out of Harms-way, I doubt, that where ſo many of them are got together at full Liberty of doing what they pleaſe, it will not answer the End. But, whatever Abuſes, Corruptions, or Deviations from Statutes are crept into the Universities, through Neglect, or Length of Time ; they might, in a great Degree, be reformed by ſtrict Injunctions from Court, (upon each Particular) to the Viſitors and Heads of Houſes : Beſides the peculiar Authority which the King may have in ſeveral Colleges, whereof his Predeceſſors were the Founders. And
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Among other Regulations, it would be very convenient to prevent the Excess of drinking among the young Students together with that scurvy Custom, (and Parent of the former Vice) the taking of Tobacco : Except where it is absolutely necessary in Point of Health.

From the Universities, the young Nobility and others of great Fortunes, are sent for up to Town, for fear of contracting any Airs of Pedantry by a College-Education; and many of the lower Gentry retire to the Inns of Court, where they are left to their own Discretions. And the Consequence of this Remifness in Education appears by observing, that Nine or Ten of those who rise in the Church or the Court, the Law or the Army, are younger Brothers, or new Men, whose narrow Fortunes have forced them upon Industry and Application.

As for the Inns of Court, unless we suppose them to be much degenerated, they must needs be the worst instituted Seminaries in any Christian Country; but whether they may be corrected without the Interposition of the Legislature, I have not Skill enough to determine. However this is certain, that all wise nations have agreed in the Necessity of a strict Education; consisting, among other Things, in the Observance of moral Duties : Especially Justice, Temperance, and Chastity

Chastity ; as well as the Knowledge of Arts, and bodily Exercifes: All which, among us, are laughed out of Doors.

Without the least Intention to offend the Clergy, I cannot but think, that through a mistaken Notion and Practice, they prevent themselves from doing much Service (which otherwise might lie in their Power) to Religion and Virtue: I mean, by affecting so much to converse with each other, and caring so little to mingle with the Laity. They have their particular Clubs, and particular Coffee-houses, where they generally appear in Clusters. A single Divine dares hardly show his Face in any Company of fine Gentlemen ; or if he does happen to fall in with them, he is silent, and suspicious, in continual Apprehension, that some pert Man of Pleasure should break an unmannerly Jest and render him ridiculous. Now I take this Behaviour of the Clergy to be just as reasonable, as if the Physicians, should agree to spend their Time in visiting one another, or their several Apothecaries, and leave their Patients to shift for themselves. In my humble Opinion the Business of the Clergy lies only among the Laity ; nor is there perhaps a more effectual Way to forward the Salvation of Men's Souls, than for spiritual Persons to make themselves as agreeable as they can in the Conversations of the World: For which

a learned Education gives them great Advantages, if they would please to improve and make use of them. It so happens, that the *Men of Pleasure*, who never go to Church, nor amuse themselves with reading Books of Devotion, form their Ideas of the Clergy from a few poor Strollers they often observe in the Streets, or sneaking out of some Person of Quality's House, where they are hired by the Lady at Ten Shillings a Month ; while those of better Figure and Parts do but seldom appear to correct these Notions. And let some Reasoners think what they please, 'tis certain, that Men must be brought to esteem and Respect the Clergy, before they can be perswaded to be in Love with Religion. No Man values the best Medicine, if administered by a Physician who is a Person he hates or despises. If the Clergy were as forward to appear in all Companies, as other Gentlemen, and would a little study the Arts of Conversation, to make themselves agreeable; they might be welcome at every Party, where there was the least Regard for Politeneness or good Sense; and consequently prevent a thousand vicious or prophane Discourses, as well as Actions; neither would Men of Understanding complain, that a Clergyman was a Constraint upon the Company, because they could not speak Blasphemy or obscene Jest before him. And, while the People are so jealous of the Clergy's Ambition, as to abhor all
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Thoughts of the Return of Ecclesiastick Discipline among them, I do not see any other Method left for Men of that Function to take, in Order to reform the World, than by using all honest Arts to make themselves acceptable to the Laity. This no Doubt, is Part of that Wisdom of the Serpent, which the Author of Christianity directs, and is the very Method used by St. Paul, *who became all Things to all Men ; to the Jews a Jew, and a Greek to the Greeks.*

But, notwithstanding what I have said, it may be very difficult to remedy these Inconveniencies, since the Clergy seem to be of Opinion, that this Humour of sequestering themselves is a Part of their Duty ; nay, they have been told so by some of their Bishops in their Pastoral Letters, particularly by one among them of great Merit and Distinction : Who yet in his own Practice hath all his Life-time taken a Course directly contrary. But I am deceived, if an awkward Shame, and Fear of ill Usage from the Laity, have not a greater Share in this mistaken Conduct, than their own Inclinations : However, if the outward Profession of Religion and Virtue, were once in Practice and Countenance at Court, as well as among all Men in Office, or who have any Hopes or Dependance for Preferment ; a good Treatment of the Clergy would be the necessary Consequence of such a Re-

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formation; and they would soon be wise enough to see their own Duty and Interest in qualifying themselves for Lay-Conversation, when once they were out of Fear of being affronted by Ribaldry or Prophaneness.

There is one further Circumstance upon this Occasion, which I am not sure that it will be very orthodox to mention; the Clergy are the only Set of Men amongst us who constantly wear a distinct Habit from others: The Consequence of which (not in Reason, but in Fact) is this, that as long as any scandalous Persons appear in that Dress, it will continue in some Degree a Mask of Contempt. Whoever happens to see a *Scoundrel in a Gown*, reeling Home at Midnight (a Sight neither *frequent*, nor *miraculous*) is apt to entertain an ill Idea of the whole Order, and at the same Time to be extremely comforted in his own Vices. Some Remedy might be put to this, if those straggling Gentlemen who come up to Town to *seek their Fortunes*, were fairly dismissed to the *West-Indies*, where there is Work enough, and where some better Provision should be made for them, than I doubt there is at present. Or what if no Person were allowed to wear the Habit, who had not some Preferment in the Church, or at least some Temporal Fortune sufficient to keep him out of Contempt? Though in my Opinion, it were infinitely better

better if all the Clergy, except the Bishops, were permitted to appear like other Men of the graver Sort, and only to wear the Canonical Habit, while they are exercising the Duties of their Function.

And here I am at a Loss what to say upon the frequent Custom of Preaching against *Atheism*, *Deism*, *Free-Thinking*, and the like, as young Divines are particularly fond of doing, especially when they exercise their Talent in Churches frequented by Persons of Quality; which, as it is but an ill Compliment to the Audience, so I am under some Doubt whether it answers the End: Because People under those Imputations, are generally no great Frequenters of Churches, and so the Congregation is but little edified, for the sake of three or four Fools who are past Grace. Neither do I think it any Part of Prudence, to perplex the Minds of well-disposed People with Doubts, which probably would never have otherwise come into their Heads. But I am of Opinion, and dare be positive in it, that not one in a hundred of those who pretend to be *Free-Thinkers*, are really so in their Hearts. For there is one Observation which I never knew to fail; that no Gentleman of a liberal Education, and regular in his Morals, did ever profess himself a *Free-Thinker*: Where then are

these Kind of People to be found? Among the worst Part of the Soldiery, made up of discarded Valets, younger Brothers of obscure Families, and others of desperate Fortunes : Or else among the idle Town-Fops, and now and then, a drunken 'Squire of the Country. Therefore, nothing is plainer, than that Ignorance and Vice are two Ingredients absolutely necessary in the Composition of those we generally call *Free-Thinkers*, who, in Propriety of Speech, *are no Thinkers at all.*

It is a general Complaint in the City of *London*, that too many Men are put into the Commission of the Peace, whose Interest it is, that Virtue should be utterly banished from among us; who maintain, or at least enrich themselves by encouraging the grossest Immoralities ; to whom all the *Bawds* of the *Ward* pay Contribution for Shelter and Protection from the Laws. Thus these worthy Magistrates, instead of lessening Enormities, are the Occasion of twice as much Debauchery as there would be without them : For those infamous Women are forced upon doubling their Work and Industry, to answer the double Charges, of paying the Justice and supporting themselves. Like Thieves who escape the Gallows, and are let out to steal, in order to discharge the Jaylor's Fees.

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I Question not but the Government might easily redress this abominable Grievance, by enlarging the Number of Justices of the Peace; by endeavouring to chuse Men of virtuous Principles, by admitting none who have not considerable Fortunes: and perhaps, by receiving into the Number some of the most eminent of the Clergy. By forcing all of them upon severe Penalties, to act when there is Occasion; and not permitting any who are offered to refuse the Commission: But in these two last Cases, which are very material, I doubt there will be need of the Legislature.

The Reformation of the Stage is entirely in the Power of the King, and, when we consider the Consequences which Theatrical Entertainments have on the Minds of young People, does very well deserve the strictest Attention and Care. For, beside the undecent and profane Passages, and the perpetual turning into Ridicule the very Function of the Priesthood; there are many other Irregularities in most of our modern Comedies; which have been formerly pointed out by Mr. *Collier*, and since his Time by several others: But I think nobody has yet taken sufficient, if any Notice, of that abandoned, profligate Piece, the *London Cuckolds*, which, I am told, is regularly acted every Year, on the
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Day that the Lord Mayor makes his Procession through the City: which (besides the gross Affront offered by this indecent Custom, to the Lord Mayor, who, for ought we know, may be a very worthy Person) reflects the greatest Scandal on the Court for permitting it, the Managers for exhibiting, and the whole Audience for enduring it: Much less for being entertained with it.

It is worth while to observe the distributive Justice of our Comedy Writers, which is often applied to the Punishment of Virtue and the rewarding of Wickedness; directly opposite to the Rules of their best Criticks, as well as to the Practice of Dramatick Poets in all other Ages and Countries. For Example, a Country Squire, who is represented with no other Vice but that of being a Clown, and having the Accent of a particular County upon his Tongue, which is neither a Fault nor in his Power to remedy, must be condemned to marry a cast Wench; or a crack'd Chamber-Maid. On the other side a Rake-Hell of the Town, whose Character is set off with no other Accomplishments but excessive Prodigality, Prophaneness, Intemperance, and Lust; is rewarded with a Lady of great Fortune, to repair his own, which his Vices had almost ruined. And as in Tragedy, the Hero is represented to have obtained many Victories, in Order to raise his Character

cter in the Minds of the Spectators; so the Hero of a Comedy is represented to have been victorious in all his Intrigues for the same Reason.

I do not remember that our *English* Poets ever suffered a criminal Amour to succeed upon the Stage, 'till the Reign of, *King Charles II.* Ever since that Time, the Alderman is made a Cuckold, the Innocent believing Virgin is debauched, and Adultery and Fornication are supposed to be committed behind the Scenes, as part of the Action. These and many more Corruptions of the Theatre, need not continue any longer than while the Court is content to connive at or neglect them. Surely a Pension would not be ill employed on some Men of good Sense, Virtue, Wit, and Learning; who might have Power to strike out every offensive or unbecoming Passage from Plays already written, as well as those which may be offered to the Stage for the future. By these and other wise Regulations, the Theatre might become a very innocent and useful Diversion, instead of being a Scandal and Reproach to our Religion and Country.

It cannot easily be answered to God or Man, why a Law is not made for limiting the Press; at least so far as to prevent the Publishing

lishing of such pernicious Treatises, as under the Pretence of *Free-thinking*, enquiring into the *Sufficiency of Evidence*, searching after *Truth* &c. endeavour to overthrow those Tenets in Religion, which have been held inviolable almost in all Ages, by every Sect that pretend to be Christian; and therefore cannot, with any Colour of Reason, be called Points in Controversy, or Matters of Speculation. The *Divinity of Christ*, the *Immortality of the Soul* and even the Truth of all *Revelation*, are daily exploded, and denied; treated in the most insolent Manner, without the least Regard to the Importance and Dignity of the Subject, or even to common Decency; * and all this, not only in general Conversation, but in Books openly printed and publickly sold: To the very great Scandal of the Government and of the whole Nation.

The Proposals I have hitherto made for the Advancement of Religion and Morality, are such as come within the Reach of the Administration; such as a pious active Prince, with a steady Resolution, might soon bring to Effect. Nor am I aware of any Objections to be raised against what I have advanced; un-

* A notorious Instance of this may be seen, in a silly profane Pamphlet, entitled, *The Resurrection of Jesus considered, in answer to the Trial of the Witnesses*, &c.

less it should be thought that the making Religion a necessary Step to Interest and Favour, might increase Hypocrisy among us : And I really believe it would. But if one in Twenty should, by this and the like Methods, be brought over to true Piety, and the other Nineteen be only Hypocrites, the Advantage would still be great. Besides, Hypocrisy is much more eligible than open Infidelity and Vice ; it wears the Livery of Religion, it acknowledges her Authority, and is cautious of giving a Scandal. Nay a long continued Disguise, is too great a Constraint upon human Nature, especially an *English* Disposition ; Men would leave off their Vices out of mere Weariness, rather than undergo the Toil and Hazard, and perhaps Expence of practising them perpetually in private. And I believe it is often with Religion as with Love, which by much dissembling, at last grows real.

It is certain that a Reformation successfully carried on in the Cities of *London* and *Dublin*, would in Time spread itself over the two Kingdoms, since most of the considerable Youth pass there that Season of their Lives wherein the strongest Impressions are made, in Order to improve their Education, or advance their Fortune ; and those among them who return into their several Countries, are sure to be

followed and imitated as the greatest Patterns of Wit and good Breeding.

In Order to reform the Vices of these two Capitals, it would be very instrumental to have a Law made that all Taverns or Ale-Houses should be obliged to dismiss their Company by twelve o'Clock at Night, and shut up their Doors; and that no Woman should be suffered to enter any Tavern or Ale-House after the Lamps were lighted. It is easy to conceive what a Number of ill Consequences, such a Law would prevent; the Mischiefs arising from Quarrels; the Lewdness, and Thefts, and Midnight Brawls; the Diseases of Intemperance and Venery, and a thousand other Evils needless to mention. Nor would it be amiss if the Masters of publick Houses were obliged, upon the severest Penalties, to give only a Reasonable, proportioned Quantity of Wine, or any other Liquor, to every Company; and when he found his Guests disordered with Excess, to refuse them any more.

I believe there is hardly a Nation in *Christendom* where all Kind of Fraud is practised with so much Impunity; and in so unmeasurable a Degree, as with us. The Lawyer, the Tradesman, the Mechanick, have found so many Arts to deceive in their several Callings, that it is impossible for the common Prudence of Mankind to guard against them.

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The Vintner, who by mixing Poison with his Wines, destroys more Lives than any malignant Disease ; the Lawyer, who perswades you to a Purchase, which he knows is mortgaged for more than the Worth, to the utter Ruin of you and your Family ; the Goldsmith or Scrivener, who takes all your Fortune to dispose of, when he has before Hand resolved to break the following Day ; do surely deserve the Gallows much more than the Wretch who is carried there for stealing a Horse. Neither could the Legislature, in any Thing, more consult the publick Good, than by providing some effectual Remedies against these Evils : Which in most Cases deserve greater Punishment than many of those Crimes which among us are made capital.

The many Corruptions at present in every Branch of Business, are almost inconceivable. It has been computed by skilful Persons, that of above six Millions raised every Year for the Service of the Publick, one Third at least is sunk and intercepted as it passes through the several Classes and Subordinations of artful Men in Office, before the Remainder is applied to the proper Use. This is an accidental ill Effect of our Freedom : And while such Men are in Trust, who have no Checks from within, nor any Views but what are biassed towards their own Interest ; there is,

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no other Fence against them, but the Certainty of being hanged upon the first Discovery, by the arbitrary Will of an unlimited Monarch, or his *Vizier*. Among us, the only Danger to be apprehended, is the Loss of an Employment: And that Danger is to be eluded a thousand Ways. Besides, when Fraud is great, it furnishes Weapons to defend itself: And at worst, if the Crimes be so flagrant, that a Man is laid aside out of perfect Shame (which rarely happens) he retires loaded with the Spoils of the Nation! *Et fruitur Diis iratis*. I could name a Commission where several Persons, out of a Salary of five hundred Pounds, with some other visible Perquisites or Revenues, have always lived at the Rate of two Thousand; and laid out forty or fifty Thousand, upon Purchases of Land or Annuities. An hundred other Instances of the same Kind might easily be produced. What Remedy therefore can be found against such Grievances in a Constitution like ours, but to bring Religion into Countenance, and encourage those who from the Hope of future Reward, and dread of future Punishment, will be influenced to act with Justice and Integrity.

And that some Attempt should be made towards effecting such a Reformation, is perhaps more necessary than People commonly apprehend; because the Ruin of a State is generally

generally preceded by an universal Degeneracy of Manners, and Contempt of Religion ; which is entirely our Case at present.

Diis te Minorem, quod geris, imperas. HOR.

Neither is this a Matter to be deferred till a more convenient Time of Peace and Leisure : Because a Reformation in Men's Faith and Morals, is the best natural as well as religious Means to bring the War to a good Conclusion. For, if Men in Trust performed their Duty for Conscience-Sake ; Affairs would not suffer through Fraud, Falshood, and Neglect, as they now perpetually do : And if *Men* believed a God and his Providence, and acted accordingly, they might reasonably hope for his divine Assistance in so just a Cause as ours.

Nor could the Majesty of the *British* Crown appear with greater Lustre either to his Subjects or to Foreigners, than by an Administration, which producing such extraordinary and good Effects, would discover so much Power ; and Power being the natural Appetite of Princes, a limited Monarch cannot so well gratify it in any thing, as by a strict Execution of the Laws, by introducing Religion, as much as possible, to be the Turn and Fashion of the Age : Which only lies in the Power of the King and Administration ; the Prince with utmost strictness regulating the Court, the Ministry, and other
Persons

Persons in great Employments ; and these by Example and Authority, reforming all who have Dependence on them.

All other Methods for attaining this great End have hitherto proved ineffectual. Laws against Immorality have not been executed ; and Proclamations occasionally issued out to enforce them, are wholly unregarded, as Things of meer Form. Religious Societies, though begun with excellent Intention, and by Persons of undoubted Piety, are said to have dwindled into factious Clubs ; and become a Trade to enrich little knavish Informers of the meanest Rank, such as common Constables, and broken Shop-keepers.

Besides, all Parties would be obliged to concur in so good a Work as this, for their own Reputation : Neither is any Expedient more likely to unite them. For the most violent Party-men I have ever observed, are such, as in the Conduct of their Lives, have discovered the least Sense of Religion or Morality ; and when all such are laid aside, at least those among them who shall be found incorrigible, it will be a Matter perhaps of no great difficulty to reconcile the Rest.

I have confined myself, as it is before observed, to those Methods for the Advancement of Religion, which are in the Power of a Prince
limited

limited like ours, by a strict Execution of the Laws already in force : And this I doubt is a great deal more than will suddenly be reduced into Practice. Though, if any Disposition should appear towards so good a Work, it is certain, that the Assistance of the Legislative Power would be necessary to make it more compleat.

Therefore, to leave these airy Imaginations of introducing new Laws for the Amendment of Mankind : What I principally insist on, is a due Execution of the old ; which lies wholly in the Crown, and in the Authority derived from thence. And (as I asserted before) if Stations of Power, Trust, Profit, and Honour, were constantly made the Rewards of Virtue and Piety, such an Administration must needs have a mighty Influence on the Faith and Morals of the whole Kingdom : And Men of great Abilities would then endeavour to excel in the Duties of a religious Life, in order to qualify themselves for publick Service. I may possibly be wrong in some of the Means I prescribe towards this End ; but that is no material Objection against the Design itself. Let those who are at the Helm, contrive it better, which perhaps they may easily do. Every Body will agree that the Disease is manifest, as well as dangerous, that some Remedy is necessary, and that none yet applied hath been effectual ;
which

which is a sufficient Excuse for any Man who wishes well to his Country, to offer his Thoughts, when he can have no other End in View but the Publick Good. The present King is a Person of many good and virtuous Qualities: How would it brighten his Character to this and future Ages, if he would exert his utmost Authority to instil the same Virtues into his People, which they are too degenerate ever to learn, only from his Example. And, be it spoke with all the Veneration possible, for so excellent a Sovereign, his best Endeavours in this weighty Affair, are a most important Part of his Duty, as well as his Interest, and his Honour.

But, it must be confest, that as Things are now, every Man thinks he has laid in a sufficient Stock of Merit, and may very well pretend to an Employment, provided he has been loud and frequent in declaring himself for the Government. 'Tis true, he is a *Man of Pleasure*, and a *Free-Thinker*, that is, in other Words, he is a Profligate in his Morals, and a despiser of Religion; but in Point of Party, he is one to be confided in. 'Tis enough, he is a Person fully qualified for any Employment in the Court or the Navy, the Law or the Revenue; where he will be sure to leave no Arts untried of Bribery, Fraud, Injustice, and Oppression, that he can practise with any Hope of Impunity. No wonder such

such Men are true to a Government, where Liberty runs high, where Property, *however attained*, is so well secured, and where the Administration is *at last* so gentle : 'Tis impossible they could chuse any other Constitution, without changing to their Loss.

Fidelity to a present Establishment, is indeed the principal Means to defend it from a foreign Enemy ; but without other Qualifications, will not prevent Corruptions from within, and States are oftner ruined by these than the other.

It may probably be a Question, whether the Proposals I have offered towards a Reformation, be such as are most prudent and convenient ; but it is none at all, whether a general Reformation be absolutely necessary, because the Nature of Things is such, that if Abuses be not remedied, they will certainly increase : or ever stop 'till they End in the Subversion of the Commonwealth. As there must always of Necessity be some Corruptions, so in a well instituted State, the executive Power will be always contending against them, by *reducing Things* (as *Machiavel* speaks) to their first Principles, never letting Abuses grow inveterate, or multiply so far that it will be hard to find Remedies, and perhaps impossible to apply them. As he that would keep his House in Repair, must

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attend every little Breach or Flaw, and supply it immediately, or else Time alone will bring all to Ruin; how much more the common Accidents of Storms and Rain? He must live in perpetual Danger of his House falling about his Ears, and will find it cheaper to throw it quite down, and build it anew from the Ground; perhaps upon a new Foundation, or at least a new Form, which may neither be so safe nor so convenient as the Old.



APPEN-

P A R T III.

*Containing some New and Critical Reflections on
Free-Thinking, and Free-Thinkers ; also
Animadversions variorum.*

IT is generally reckoned ill Manners, as well as unreasonable, for Men to quarrel with one another upon difference in Opinion ; because that is usually supposed to be occasioned by the peculiar innate Turn of his Thoughts, which no Man can any more help in himself, than he can help the natural Dispositions of his Mind, or Constitution of his Body. However, I am apt to think that this Maxim is not universally True ; and only holds good in those Cases where the Question is pretty equally decided amongst the *Wise* and the *Learned*. I will give one Instance, in which the Limitation and Fallibility of this Notion will justly appear. If any Man should be so weak as to argue publickly in Defence of *absolute Power* in a *single Person*, and should gravely tell you *that he cannot help being of this Opinion : It is his Way of Thinking*, and he shall always maintain and justify it, 'till he is convinced of the contrary. And I will suppose,
as

as is usually the Case, that you find it impossible to convince him, by any Arguments drawn from the abstract Nature of Government; Reason is generally lost upon this Sort of Politicians: However, he might observe, that all rational and sober People have quite different Notions; that their Principles have an absolute Tendency to produce good Effects, but that arbitrary Power was ever known to produce a great deal of Mischief wherever it was established. And therefore, he ought in Conscience to renounce, or at least conceal his Opinion: Which if he does not, he should, in all free States, be treated as the common Enemy of Mankind. Besides, I am very sure that a Man of Tolerable Reason, some Experience, and willing to be better informed, *may* apprehend he is got into a wrong Opinion; and tho' the whole Course of his Mind and Inclination would persuade him to believe it true, yet he may be convinced that he is in an Error (though he does not see where it lies) by the bad Effects of it in the common Conduct of this Life; and by observing those Persons for whose Wisdom and Goodness he has the greatest Deference, to be of a contrary Sentiment. According to Mr. *Hobbes's* Comparison of *Reasoning* with *casting up Accounts*; "That whoever finds a *Mistake*

*“ stake in the Sum total, must allow himself out :
 “ Tho’ after repeated Trials he may not see in
 “ which Article he has misreckoned.”*

I am very sensible what a Weakness and Presumption it is, to reason against the general Humour and Disposition of Mankind ; yet I cannot resist my Inclination to tell the World, openly and plainly, that when any one goes about to broach new Opinions, and write Books which have no other Tendency than to establish *Scepticism*, to root every *fixt Principle* out of the Minds of Men, and to extirpate *Religion, Order, and Sobriety out of the World* ; I cannot see why such a Man should not be treated with as much Rigour, as the above-mentioned Advocate for absolute or arbitrary Government.

Surely every rational and sober Person must think it a Scandal to any Civil Government, especially one so well constituted as ours, that such an unbounded Liberty should be allowed of publishing Books, against those Doctrines and Tenets in Religion wherein all *Christians* have agreed, and much more to connive at such Tracts as reject all Revelation, and, by their Consequences, not only undermine the Foundations of Piety and Virtue, but often deny the very *Being* of a God.

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Every Man of Sense, Candour, and Ingenuity, must abhor the Humour of the Age, in delighting to fling Scandal upon the *Clergy* in general. Which, besides the Disgrace to Religion itself, casts an Ignominy on the whole Kingdom. We have no better Materials to compound the *Priesthood* of, than the Mass of Mankind, which, corrupted as it is, those who receive Orders must have some Vices to leave behind them when they enter into the Church; and if a few do still adhere, it is no wonder, but rather a great one that they are no worse. And therefore, I do not think that the Vices and Enormities which are particularly alledged against the *Clergy*, are more justly laid to their Charge, than to other Men; because that would be to make Religion itself, or at least the very best Ecclesiastical Institution in the World, answerable for the Errors and Depravities of human Nature.

I would not upon any Account be thought an Advocate for what some People call *Priestcraft*; for I really believe there may have been such a Thing in the World; but will any impartial Man say that the *Clergy* of the Church of *England*, or any of their dissenting Brethren ought, now a days, to be charged with it? Will any Body that is acquainted with the Lives and Doctrines of our modern Divines, tax them with being remarkable for their *Ambition*,

*tion, or Love of Power ; or self-interested Designs, exclusive of the Service of Religion ; or a dogmatical and occult way of arguing and imposing Mysteries on the People ; will any one I say pretend to charge these Things upon the Protestant Clergy in General ? I will not deny, but that there are Clergymen in this Kingdom, who are as bad as other People : Religion does not make every vicious Person, who may happen to invade the Province of good Men, by entering into holy Orders, religious and virtuous ; neither is it agreeable to the Wisdom of God, or the visible Dispensations of his Providence, in the Constitution of Nature, that it should be so. Nor is there any Reason at all for asserting, that a Flock of *Sheep* are Beasts of Prey, because a few *Wolves* have been discovered among them disguised in *Sheep's* cloathing.*

I am perswaded that no honest and candid Reader will charge me with being a Bigot from any thing which has been said in the preceding Pages : Because I am sure there has been nothing advanced inconsistent with Reason, or the general Notions of plain well-meaning People. It cannot be denied but that every Man has a Right to judge for himself in Matters of Religion, and to form his Notions of it according to the Rules of Reason, the Laws of Nature, the Principles of general Axioms, and univer-
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fal Truths; but if we are seriously told, by
 People who are remarkable for their Wis-
 dom and good Sense, for the Integrity of their
 Lives, and Sanctity of their Manners; that
 God himself has revealed to us a certain Sy-
 stem of Religion, conformable to his own
 Divine Attributes, and adapted to our Capa-
 cities; that this Revelation is conveyed to us in
 a Book called *the Scriptures*, which ought to
 be the Fountain of our Principles, and Rule
 of our Faith and Conduct, not only in our
 divine Speculations and Practice, but in the mo-
 ral Actions of Life. Ought we not to consider
 a little before we venture to pronounce, *that*
all this is false? That there is no Reason or Ne-
cessity for it, and that the Light of Nature
alone is sufficient? with abundance of the like
 thoughtless Objections. Would it not much
 more become a rational Creature to proceed
 upon a Subject of so much Importance, with
 great Deliberation and Decency? And at least
 give ourselves time to doubt before we deter-
 mine. Religion is not a Subject to be treated
 in a hasty, splenetick, peevish Manner; nor
 should its Professors be treated with so much
 Insult and Contempt, even supposing them to
 be a *Parcel of miserable, mistaken Wretches,*
who are ignorant of the polite World and the
Pleasures of Free-Thinking. For who knows
 but if we come to consider the Matter se-
 riously and impartially, whether it is not the
 Duty of every *Free-Thinker*, in Consequence
 of

of his Title and the genuine Character signified by it, to act, and think, and reason like a Gentleman; and, if I may be allowed the Expression, to talk like a Christian. I remember a certain *Author* (from whom I shall quote a few Passages before I conclude these Reflections) speaking of Infidelity tells us, that *Libertines in Practice and Infidels in Speculation, by arrogating to themselves the specious Title of Free-Thinkers, have annexed a bad Idea to the Word, which once signified something highly laudible in any Rank of Life, especially among Persons of a liberal Education.*

There has hardly ever been a *Term* of Honour, which has not in Time, by the Misapplication of it, become a *Term* of Repræch. Thus *Free-Thinking*, (which is in itself the Glory and Perfection of human Nature) is at last worn into Disgrace, through the Rashness of some, the Fears of others, the Vices of many, and the specious Pretences of crafty and designing Men. To *Think freely* is not to think at Random: It is not to think like a Fool or a Madman, but like a *Philosopher*; it is not to think without the Checks of Reason and Judgment; but without the Encumbrance of *Prejudice* and *Passion*. *Freedom of Thought* is like *Freedom in Action*: To enjoy the one or the other in Perfection, it must be

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subject to proper Laws and Regulations : And the Outlaw has of all Men, the least Pretensions to Liberty . In short, as a Man can never appear like a *real Free-Thinker*, if he does not behave like a *Gentleman* ; so I can never allow him to be one, who is not a *Religious Man*. For if his Thoughts are so limited or bewilder'd that he cannot comprehend the Existence of God, and the Evidence of Religion ; he may properly be said to have Shackles and Fetters on his Notions, and to wander in the Clouds and Mists of Ignorance and Prejudice.

The best Things degenerate by Abuse into the worst : In that Case, the most approved Remedy is not to prohibit or destroy them in their State of Corruption ; but to endeavour, by all prudent Measures, to recover them to their proper Use. Indeed it must be granted, Society has suffered, in several Instances, by gratifying Men in the full Liberty of divulging their Thoughts ; but then, it has profited a Thousand Times more by Virtue of that very Indulgence. It is a common Observation, that every Conveniency in Life, is alloyed with some Inconveniency. Therefore the most reasonable Method of proceeding in every difficulty of this Kind, is to have recourse to the *Merchant's Logick* ; to state the Account of Profit and Loss, and so determine our Judgment

Judgment according as the Ballance lies : Remembering still, that it is not possible to Trade to much Advantage without some Losses.

True *Free-Thinking*, is the Foundation of all human Liberty : Remove the one, and the other cannot stand. It is the Source of Knowledge and Wisdom ; the Parent of Arts and Sciences ; it promotes Industry, and procures Wealth ; it embellishes Virtue and good Manners ; it supports Order and Government ; and is the only Bulwark of true Religion. In Proportion as this Divine Faculty languishes, every Ornament and comfort of Life declines : And in those Countries, where the free Exercise of Reason is wholly discouraged and treated as a Crime, Experience shews us, that the People groan under the complicated Calamities of *Slavery, Ignorance, Superstition, Idleness, and Poverty* ; and are hardly to be distinguished from Brutes, but by a superior Degree of Misery. But none of these Calamities can ever be the Fate of a People, who are resolved to have their Thoughts in their own keeping ; and so far as we suffer our Understandings to be checked by an Authority, but the Convictions of Reason, so far we give up our *Virtue*, our *Religion*, our *Liberties*, and every *Social Happiness*. Thus we may see, that every Thing
valuable

valuable in Life, is, in effect, the Result of *Free-Thinking*.

As the Mind of Man has naturally some Tendency towards Truth, and a prevailing Averſion to Falſhood; ſo I heartily wiſh, ſince it lies in every one's Power, that People would try to acquire one other happy Diſpoſition; I mean a Willingneſs to be informed: Which might, in Time, kindle into ſuch a diſinter-eſted Love of Truth, as would make them ambitious of always thinking and acting like rational Creatures, to the very utmoſt of their Capacities.

But ſo little Regard have the generality of Men to the Dignity and Excellency of their Nature, that inſtead of improving their rational Faculties, they often ſuffer them to languish and die: They learn by degrees to prevaricate with themſelves; and in time, to be wholly indifferent as to their Opinions of Things: Or, if upon any Occaſion they are earneſt and reſolute in their Notions, it is ſeldom from a Love of Truth, but from a ſervile Regard to ſome over-ruling Paſſion, or Intereſt. Hence it is that we have ſeen ſo many of our Countrymen, whoſe good Senſe is their greateſt reproach, contend very warmly, both for Maxims in Politicks, and for Doctrines in Religion, which are directly oppoſite. Juſt like the
famous

famous *Descartes* ; of whom it is related, that when he first applied himself to draw up a System of Natural Philosophy, he founded it upon the Doctrine of a *Void* ; but a Friend informing him, that the *Hypothesis*, he went upon, was very unfashionable at Court ; he immediately changed his Plan, and built his System upon the Supposition of an entire *Plenitude*.

In general, every Man may be said to have his Mind rightly disposed to Truth, when his Judgment or his Notions are the impartial Result of a due Consideration of them in all their Qualities and Circumstances ; or else from a just Comparison of different Things or Notions one with another. An unbiaſſed Understanding delights in Truth, and acquiesces in it with the same Complacency, as a good Conscience rejoices in Innocence and Virtue. Neither can the upright Man any more harbour a wilful Error in his Mind, or endeavour to impose it upon others, than he can cherish a known Vice, and strive to recommend and countenance it by his Example.

It is a great Unhappiness, that we generally Reason with the most Impartiality and the greatest Accuracy upon those Topicks, which are of the least Consequence to us. The Cause of this Misfortune is very obvious ; the
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Prejudices and Passions and Interests of Men, are no way engaged in the Experiments of the Air-Pump, nor in adjusting the Modes of Syllogisms, nor in settling the Doctrine of Triangles; and therefore in these Kinds of reasoning we consent to the Truth, as soon as we apprehend it, without reluctance. Ask a Man who has but the least smattering of *Geometry*, whether the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two Right Angles, and he will immediately reply in the Affirmative. Demand of him whether two parallel Lines can ever meet in a Point; and he will Answer, without Hesitation, in the Negative. But if you happen to try him upon a few political Propositions, as evident as the other, and full as soon comprehended; and ask him (for Instance) whether the People are formed into Society for the Pleasure of the chief Magistrate, or for their own Happiness, and the Magistrate consequently set up for the good of the People; and whether a Tyrant who breaks through the fundamental Laws of the Land, and invades the Property of a People, does not, upon his Perseverance in such Proceedings, forfeit all his Right to their Allegiance: I say put these plain Questions to him; and instead of making a direct Answer, he shall lead you a Dance through an endless Labyrinth of Sophistry, and often dive out of sight into so many Subterfuges, that you perceive all the while, he is not Ignorant of the Truth.

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On the other hand, how becoming does it look when a Man reasons upon the Truths of Religion, of Moralty, and the Principles of Government, with the same equitable Temper, as if his Thoughts were empolyed upon a Problem in Mathematicks? And when upon an intricate Debate, he sums up his Conclusions, he does it with the Exactness and Integrity of a fair dealing, honourable *Merchant*; who settles a perplexed Account, without once reflecting whether he is to remain Debtor, or Creditor, upon the Balance.

When an honest, generous, well-meaning Writer, undertakes to treat upon Religion, he will neither suffer himself to be led away on the one side, by a Fondness for Singularity; nor on the other, by as weak an Attachment to what may be justly called Popularity in Notions. He will not so much attend to what is accounted Religion by the many, as to the Enquiry after what is true Religion, and ought to be received as such. If ever we enter into the former Consideration, it should be only to examine whether that, which commonly passes in the World for Religion, is the real Thing, or somewhat of a different Nature. I know of no Rule to judge of Religion by in the general, but Reason; nor of the *Christian* System in particular, but the *New Testament*. And as every
Man

Man is to answer for his own Principles, and subsequent Actions, and not others for him; so ought every Man himself to know why he believes or acts; and not to think it sufficient, that another undertakes to know it for him. From hence I conclude, that it becomes every Man, who would proceed wisely, by adhering to his Religion on substantial Grounds, and not meerly that he may be in the Fashion of the Country where he lives, to think of his Perswasions with the utmost Freedom; that is, without Prejudice.

The Person who surveys Religion with this unbiaſſed Temper of Mind, will find it to be as diſtant from the Madneſs of the Enthuſiaſt, and the Folly of the ſuperſtitious Man, as it is from the moſt extravagant Infidelity of the Atheiſt. Nay, he will further diſcover, that theſe different Extremes are at the Bottom owing to one and the ſame Cauſe; the Neglect of thinking freely, and the permitting of Prejudices to interpoſe, and darken the Truth.

The Enthuſiaſt dreams of nothing but Gifts and Commiſſions from Heaven, and imagines himſelf its peculiar Favourite; and that he is inſpired from thence with every wild Fancy that happens to ſpring up in a warm and diſtempered Brain; and all this for no other Reaſon, but becauſe he thinks ſo, and feels a rapturous Pleaſure in the Conceit of it. To
one

one possess'd with this Notion, every Crime becomes lawful, and every Design that turns up in his Head, is a divine Impulse. He robs, he murders, he overturns the World, if he can; and all is Right, all is approved of God, and the blackest Crimes are glorious: A Devil is a Saint, and a Fury an Angel of Light. The Prejudice that blinds him, is a gross Ignorance of the Nature of God; and an unmeasurable Opinion of his own Excellency. He thinks the Deity capable of commanding any Thing; and himself of performing every Thing. He fancies God may turn Virtue into Vice, and Vice into Virtue; make Truth Falshood, and Falshood Truth; and reconcile all Contradictions. He knows nothing of the immutable Reason of Things, and the certain Rectitude of the Almighty's Will, according to which all his Actions are determined. He imagines himself far above the rest of Mankind; worthy of every Privilege from above, and alone fit to be the great Instrument of Providence upon all Occasions. If he raises Disturbances in the State, he is sent to convert the World by the Sword. If he exercises his Power in Cruelty, he is the Scourge of God. If his Brain happens not to be filled with such mighty Schemes, he is satisfied with sitting still, and contemning his Fellow-creatures; as being far below him in their religious Progress. He alone converses with Heaven; he sees God, he is a Prophet,

he feels the divine Spirit within him, and if he does no Mischief, he takes care not to do the least Good in the World. It is enough that he loves God, and feels a kind of sensual Pleasure in musing upon his Commerce with Heaven. By this he fancies to himself, that he gains a high Degree in his Favour, tho' he obeys not one of his Commandments ; tho' he acts with no concern for his Honour, nor for the Good of his Creatures. Thus his Vanity and Ignorance unite to promote his unsufferable Arrogance, and hearty Contempt of Truth, of Reason, and of every Body in the the World, except himself and his Affociates.

Among another sort of People, the Spirit of true Religion, is as much lost in Superstition and Ceremonies. Superstition is something different in its Completion from Enthusiasm, as it has more of Folly in it than of Madness: Tho' they are frequently found to thrive pretty well together. Superstition is the Consequence of low and mean Ideas of God. It brings him down to the Level of mortal Men, and of the most despicable among them. It paints him as a childish and vain Being, pleas'd with the offering of Fools, with Flattery and Pageantry, with Gewgaws and Shews ; and what Men are sometimes taken with, it supposes him likewise to delight in : And even in a manner to be bribed with such Trifles.

Some-

Sometimes it multiplies the Number of Deities, and erects every Thing they see, or feel, or taste, or smell, into an Object of Worship; and then animates and adorns those Idols with a thousand Frailties and Vices, with weak Passions and unmanly Pleasures. At other times, it allows of one supreme Governor, but surrounds him with such Numbers of inferiour Divinities, or (in the modern Language) Saints, that he is almost lost in the Crowd, and inaccessible, unless it be through the Multitude which encircles his Throne; and his Power is so divided among them, that very little, if any of it, seems to be left to himself: By degrees he becomes neglected, and his Ministers only regarded or addressed to. But if Superstition does neither of these, but leaves the Unity untouched, it is sure to represent him as the most capricious and peevish, the most unreasonable and cruel Being, that can possibly be conceived. And then the Service it teaches us to pay, is proportionable to the Deity it presents to us. It consists in stately Domes, in consuming Treasures to no end or use, in numerous Attendants splendidly attired; in sending up odouriferous Clouds of Smoke; in destroying the Beasts of the Earth; in abject and cringing Postures; in Cruelties upon ourselves and others, in every Thing that the most slavish Imagination can invent, to gratify a luxurious, vain,

vain, ill-humoured, and tyrannical Eastern Monarch. The Effect of this is, Men soon grow to imitate the Impertinencies or Crimes, which they first make their Deities guilty of. But if Superstition happens to meet with Enthusiasm, (which is not very uncommon) the Effects are yet more terrible; then the Rage and Fury of the one, joins to support the Folly of the other. It immediately brings with it a Commission from above to destroy all who refuse the most absurd Homage, and have the Insolence to offer up to Heaven only a reasonable Service; say what you will, the incensed Power must be appeased by the Sacrifice of such hated Rebels. Thus Men are stirred up to butcher one another for Religion; they fancy Heaven is pleased with their Zeal; and the World in the mean while is filled with Blood-shed, Horror, and Confusion.

Atheism is certainly owing to as gross Prepossessions as can be imagined. It is taking up an Opinion, that there was no Creator, and that there is no Governor of the World, upon the most absurd Suppositions; against all the Principles of Reason, and against all the Arguments arising from the Beauty, Order, and Design, which are visible in all Parts of the Creation. It is even against the Interest of every Man, who lives up to the Dignity of his rational Faculties, and the Principles of human Nature,

Nature, that the Tenets of *Atheism* should be true : Which is a plain Proof, that it must be owing to some strong Prejudice, overpowering both Reason and Self-love; that any one is an *Atheist*.

There are in the World two different Characters of *Atheists*. There is what we may call the good-natured, honest *Atheist*. This Sort are they whose Lives and Actions are, perhaps, as blameless as the Manners and Conduct of religious Men; they delight in Goodness and in every Thing that is reasonable and beautiful. The honest Atheist loves Mankind; is social and publick-spirited : And even that good Temper of his, prepares him to receive the Prejudices that mislead him. He has been accustomed from his Childhood, to confound Superstition and Bigotry with Religion. It was Superstition he sucked in with his Milk : That was what he learned from his Nurse; and having never examined the Matter nicely, he looks upon it as the Religion of wiser People, and being, led into this Mistake, it is no Wonder that he rails against it, as monstrous, absurd, destructive to Mankind, and even impossible; nor is it unreasonable to view Superstition in this Light, but the Misfortune is, that he confounds it with Religion, which bears a wrong Sound in his Ears. This is a great and unhappy Prejudice; but such as I hope is pardonable; and

and easier, much easier, to be removed, than the Blindness and Madness of Superstition and Enthusiasm.

But then, there is the vicious and immoral *Atheist*, who is only against Religion, because Religion is against him. He hates to be confined within the stated Limits of Reason and good Sense; he desires an unbounded Freedom of Action; would have all Pleasure and Happiness meet in himself, and values not what happens to others provided it does not affect him. It is surprizing, that such a Libertine should endeavour to persuade himself, that there is no Government or Wisdom in the Universe, because his Actions contradict every Maxim, which Order and Wisdom would require; and because, if there be a wise and omnipotent Governor, he has every Thing to fear from him.

If a Man can but guard against the many and different Prepossessions, which too often find an easy Accession to his Mind, he may arrive at *true Religion*; which is only neglected because it is rarely known. It supports itself by no Prejudice, nor Custom, nor worldly Power; but by pure Reason and good Sense. The Service true Religion requires of us, is to imitate that wise and glorious Being, we adore, by making ourselves (like him) beneficial to all who come within our Knowledge

ledge true Religion never puts us on Methods of serving the Deity, which are destructive of the Happiness of our own Species; but inspires us with all the Greatness and Largeness of Soul which can fill the Mind of Man. In a Word, he that is truly Religious, is the most rational, the most generous. and best-natured Creature living; happy within himself, and Happiness to all about him, he is free from the perpetual Anxieties of the Superstitious, the wild Perturbations of the Enthusiast, and the comfortless Prospects of the Atheist. And, as he is in the fairest way to be happy here, so he may justly expect to have it continued to him hereafter, if there be any Justice in the Government of the World: So much has Religion the Advantage of all the Schemes opposite to it.

* “ The Prospect of a future State is the secret Comfort and Refreshment of the human Soul; it is that which cheers the Heart of a Christian, and makes Nature look gay about him; it doubles all his Pleasures, and supports him under all Afflictions. He can look at Disappointments and Misfortunes, Pain and Sickness, and Death itself, with Indifference, so long as he keeps in view the Pleasures of Eternity; that happy State, in which there will be no Fears nor

* Spectator Vol. 3 N^o 186.

“ Appre-

“ Apprehensions, Pains nor Sorrows, Sickneſs
 “ or Separation ! Why will any Man be ſo
 “ impertinently officious, as to tell me that all
 “ this is only Fancy and Deluſion ? Is there any
 “ Merit in being the Meſſenger of ill News ?
 “ If it is a Dream, let me enjoy it, ſince
 “ it makes me both the happier and better
 “ Man.”

I muſt confeſs I know not how to truſt a
 Man who believes neither Heaven nor Hell,
 or in other Words, a future State of Rewards
 and Punishments. Not only natural Self-love,
 but Reaſon, directs us to promote our own
 Intereſt above all things. A Believer will
 never think it can be for his Intereſt to do
 me a Miſchief, becauſe he is ſure, upon the
 Ballance of Accounts, to find himſelf a loſer
 by it. On the Contrary, if he conſiders his
 own Welfare in his Behaviour towards me,
 it will lead him to do me all the Good he
 can, and at the ſame time, reſtrain him
 from doing me an Injury. An Unbeliever
 does not act like a reaſonable Creature, if he
 favours me contrary to his preſent Intereſt,
 or does not diſtreſs me when it turns to his
 preſent Advantage. Honour and good Na-
 ture may indeed tie up his Hands, but as
 theſe would be very much ſtrengthened by
 Reaſon and Principle, ſo with them they are
 only Inſtincts, or wavering unſettled Notions,
 which reſt not upon any Foundations.

Infidelity

Infidelity has been attack'd with so much Success of late Years, that it is driven out of all its Out-works. The Atheist has not found his Post tenable, and is therefore retired into Deism, and a Disbelief of revealed Religion only. But the Truth of it is, the greatest Number of this Set of Men, are those who for want of a virtuous Education, or examining the Grounds of Religion, know so very little of the Matter in Question, that their Infidelity is but another Term for their Ignorance.

As Folly and Inconsiderateness are the Foundations of Infidelity, the great Pillars and Supports of it are either a Vanity of appearing wiser than the rest of Mankind, or an Ostentation of Courage in despising the Terrors of another World, which have so great an Influence on what they call weaker Minds, or an Aversion to a Belief which must cut them off from many of those Pleasures they propose to themselves, and fill them with remorse for many of those they have already tasted.

The great Articles of the Christian Religion, have been so clearly proved from the Authority of that Divine Revelation in which they are delivered, that it is impossible for those who have Ears to hear, and Sense to understand the plainest Truths, not to be convinced of them. But were it possible for any thing in the Christian Faith to be errone-

ous I can find no ill Consequences in adhering to it. The Points of the Incarnation and Sufferings of our Saviour produce naturally such Habits of Virtue in the Mind of Man, that, I say, suppose it possible for us to be mistaken in them, the Infidel himself must at least allow, that no other System of Religion could so effectually contribute to the heightning of Morality. They give us great Ideas of the Dignity of human Nature, and of the Love which the Supreme Being bears to his Creatures, and consequently engage us in the highest Acts of Duty towards our Creator, our Neighbour, and ourselves. How many noble Arguments has St. *Paul* raised from the chief Articles of our Religion, for the Advancement of Morality in its three greatest Branches? To give a single Example in each Kind: What can be a stronger Motive to a firm Trust and Reliance on the Mercies of our Maker, than the giving us his Son to suffer for us? What can make us love and esteem even the most inconsiderable of Mankind, more than the Thought that Christ died for him? Or what dispose us to set a stricter Guard upon the Purity of our own Hearts, than our being Members of Christ, and Part of a Society of which that immaculate Person is the Head? But these are only a Specimen of those admirable Enforcements of Morality which the Apostle has drawn from the History of his divine Master

If

If our modern Infidels considered these Matters with that Candour and Seriousness which they deserve, we should not see them act with such a Spirit of Bitterness, Arrogance, and Malice : They would not be raising such insignificant Cavils, Doubts, and Scruples, as may be started against every Thing that is not capable of mathematical Demonstration ; in Order to unsettle the Minds of the Ignorant, disturb the publick Peace, subvert Morality, and throw all Things into Disorder and Confusion. It is therefore an unpardonable Crime, in Men of Letters, if upon any Occasion they make use of their Learning to seduce the Ignorant, and entice them through crooked By-paths, out of the High-Road of Knowledge. We may easily make the most fallacious Sophistry pass among the common People for undeniable Truths : But then, with the very same Pains we take to impose upon them, they may be taught to distinguish Sense and Reason, from Whims, and wild Notions ; Virtue from Vice ; and true Religion from any Imposture that may be set up in its Likeness. Nay, the Mind of Man will more easily be led into the Knowledge and Apprehension, of plain simple Truths, than to acquiesce in perplexed and specious Errors. It is our peculiar Happiness, that neither the Laws of the Land, nor the Maxims of Christianity, nor the Principles of the Reformation, influence us in the least to practice so inhuman

a Deceit upon any of our Fellow-creatures : So that they, who among us are guilty of such Baseness, remain without Excuse. And let me tell our Anti-Christians, if the grosser Understandings, who have little or no Leisure, and perhaps less Inclination, to learn, are contented to take all their Notions upon Trust ; they should, at least give them implicit Truths, since those are, to the full as cheap as Falshood, and infinitely more convenient for Society.

But if none of these Reflections can have any Influence on them, there is yet one that perhaps may ; because it is adapted to their Vanity, by which they seem to be guided more than by their Reason. I would therefore have them consider, that the wisest and best Men in all Ages of the World, have been those who lived up to the Religion of their Country: When they saw nothing in it opposite to Morality. *Pythagoras's* first Rule directs us to worship the Gods *as it is ordained by Law*, for that is the most natural Interpretation of the Precept. *Socrates*, who was the most renowned among the Heathens both for Wisdom and Virtue, in his last Moments, desires his Friends to offer a Cock to *Æsculapius*; doubtless out of a submissive Deference to the established Worship of his Country. *Xenophon* tells us, that his Prince (whom he sets forth as a Pattern of Perfection) when
he

he found his Death approaching, offered Sacrifices on the Mountains to the *Persian Jupiter*, and the Sun, *according to the Custom of the Persians*; for those are the Words of the Historian. Nay, the *Epicureans* and Atomical Philosophers shewed a very remarkable Modesty in this Particular; for, though the Being of a God was entirely repugnant to their Schemes of natural Philosophy, they contented themselves, with the Denial of a Providence, asserting at the same Time the Existence of Gods in general; because they would not shock the common Belief of Mankind, and the Religion of their Country.

Our modern Writers in the Free-Thinking Way, who have been most elaborate in puzzling the Truth, and putting a Gloss upon Errors and Absurdities, have for the most part not wanted Acuteness of Understanding, but Integrity of Heart; and there appears a great deal more of Malice than of Ignorance in their indirect Reasoning. Neither is it a difficult Matter to discern whether certain Pamphleteers discover (in our blunt Phrase) most of the *Fool* or the *Knave*; one of this Species of Logicians, may generally be known by the following Marks. He has a tolerable Perspicuity of Style, a competent Share of Wit and Imagination; he discovers a stock of Reading sufficient to comprehend the Subject in dispute; he applies artfully to the Passions
and

and favourite Prejudices of the People ; and by the Help of a large Number of fine sounding Words to round his Periods, he can make the most of a weak Argument, and Reason very consequentially upon false Principles: But then, how visible is it (let him say what he will of his Sincerity) that his Errors are not Mistakes, but the Result of Choice and mature Prevarication.

Sincerity in Opinion and in Controversy, is the receiving, or rejecting, a Notion or Argument, from no other Motive, but because it appears to be true or false, reasonable or unreasonable : without being in the least influenced, in our Determinations, by any other Consideration whatsoever. This is true Philosophical Integrity, and Uprightness of reasoning ; and a Man will always stand justified, let him be never so much mistaken, so long as his Thoughts are conducted by this fair Principle.

The Commendableness of this Sincerity will appear in the strongest Light, by representing to ourselves the Degeneracy of those Men, who lay aside all regard to it ; who can write, and talk, and act in Defiance to their own Conviction ; who can strenuously contend for some Opinions, which they know to be false and dogmatically impose others upon the Ignorant for evident Truths, which at the same
Time

Time they know to be very disputable, not to say incapable of being ascertained. This is so great a Corruption of the reasoning Faculty, that it may, with Candour, be accounted an entire Defection of the Mind from Wisdom, Virtue, and Religion : And though this Sort of Wickedness comes not within the Cognizance of the Laws ; yet it manifests a cool, settled Disposition to confound all Things, Virtue and Vice, Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood : So that were not the bad Effects of this Depravity checked by the Fear of Penalties, and an Apprehension of the just Resentments of Mankind ; there is sufficient Reason to believe a Person of this abandoned Character, would set at nought the Sacredness of every social Obligation, when his Interest and his Passions were to be gratified. On the other Hand ; we may naturally suppose, the Man who will upon no Account violate his Sincerity, has his Heart well-disposed towards every Thing, that is good, and right, and worthy of Commendation.

David said in his *haste*, *all Men are Liars*. This was a hard Judgment ; however he makes some Apology for it, by owning, that it was a *hasty* Expression : But he might have asserted, without any Limitation, *that all Men are sometimes mistaken*, even the very wisest. And if so, every Man ought to distrust himself a little, before he ventures to assert

assert his own Opinions before all the World. I would therefore recommend to every positive Controversialist, to endeavour to fit their Minds for sound Knowledge ; by acquiring, if possible, that which Dr. *Boulter* calls a *Habit of doubting*. This excellent Prelate tells us, “ That
 “ as all Reasoning proceeds from this Operation of the Mind ; and all Prudence from
 “ Caution and Circumspection : So he that
 “ never *Doubts*, will as naturally fall into
 “ frequent Errors, as the Man who acts
 “ without Precaution, will often run into
 “ wrong Measures.”

The most prudential, equitable Method of proceeding in the Search of true Knowledge, is by *Descartes* called *doubting of every Thing* ; who recommends it as the first necessary and Useful Step which ought to be taken, in Order to come at Certainty. And he very justly lays a great Stress upon upon it : because it is requisite, in examining into every Proposition, to endeavour to have as little Prepossession to either side of the Question, as if it were some new Matter proposed to us : or some old Notion, with such equal Reasons on either Hand, as at first, to leave the Mind in a perfect Neutrality : not knowing which way to determine its Judgment.

Our Prejudices, and Errors, must be very numerous, since the generality of the Opinions

ous we embrace, are not the result of a rational Enquiry ; but received upon the Authority of our Country, our Parents, our Teachers, and such Persons as we commonly converse with ; or they are owing to our Passions, or Interests ; or, lastly, they are approved for being witty, or bold ; and often for being singular and distinguishing. And when we do believe what is really true, it is oftner owing to chance, than to our Knowledge of the solid Foundation, on which it is built. Therefore, in such a confused Multitude of Opinions, it is necessary that we examine carefully, whether many Things, which we esteem to be true, may not be found false upon a strict Scrutiny.

But, notwithstanding what has been said ; we are not to think, that any one should, or indeed that he can, actually Doubt of the Truth of every Proposition ; common Sense will not permit us to doubt, whether two and two make four ; and whether the whole of any Thing is bigger than any one of the Parts. But a Lover of Truth will search into the Bottom of Things, with as much Diligence and Exactness, as if he doubted of them, before he pronounces them to be certain and indisputable. Therefore, an honest Man should labour more especially to acquire this Habit of philosophical Doubting, where he

has most Reason to apprehend the Weight of some Prejudice on either side of the Question. To this rational Doubting, there are two very opposite Extreams.

The first is an obstinate Perverseness of Mind, in adhering to whatever we have once maintained, without even considering whether we have reason on our side or not. Some People have not Patience to hear their Opinions contradicted; they have an unmanly Dread of letting new Light into their Understandings, lest they should perceive more dark Corners in their Souls, than they are willing to acknowledge.

The other is a State of Scepticism; when a Man upon Pretence of many Errors kept up in the World, and the great Difficulty of disintangling the Truth from the Intricacy of so many perplexed and opposite Opinions, shall sit down with a total Neglect of Reason, and a Contempt of Knowledge, in an affected doubting: I call it so; because, among those Persons who have given themselves this Air of superior Wisdom, there have not appeared any thorough-paced *Scepticks*; none who pretended to doubt of the Truths of the Mathematicks; none who thought all Things so equally probable, as not to make use of their Senses, like other People;

People, for the Preservation of themselves ;
and of the Maxims of common Prudence;
in conducting their Affairs.

I shall only make one other Observation,
viz. That the great Truths of Religion and
Morality, come within a narrow Compass;
and may be apprehended by a plain Capacity.
And as for the Refinements in these Topicks,
which have been introduced into the World
by speculative Men ; the Knowledge of them
is not necessary (and very often pernicious)
to the Bulk of Mankind. The applauded
Systems of these kinds of Learning do not
improve, but confound the People, and the
Study of them, at best, is but a solemn Idle-
ness.

F I N I S



1871

People for the preservation of their lives
and of the means of common life
in carrying their lives.

I shall only make one other observation
on the subject of the preservation of life
and may be expected by a plain person
And as for the preservation of life



which have been
by specimens of the
is not necessary
to the preservation of life

systems of these
improve, but cannot
save of time, at least a lifetime

1871

